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LANCE ARMSTRONG
WHY I'LL NEVER CHEAT AT GOLF

CELEBRATING 15 YEARS OF THE PRO V1

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Think of hybrids as **meeting certain distances**, not as replacing certain irons. – p108



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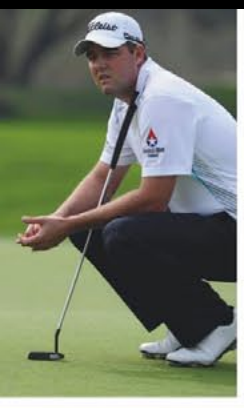
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SAM KAPLAN





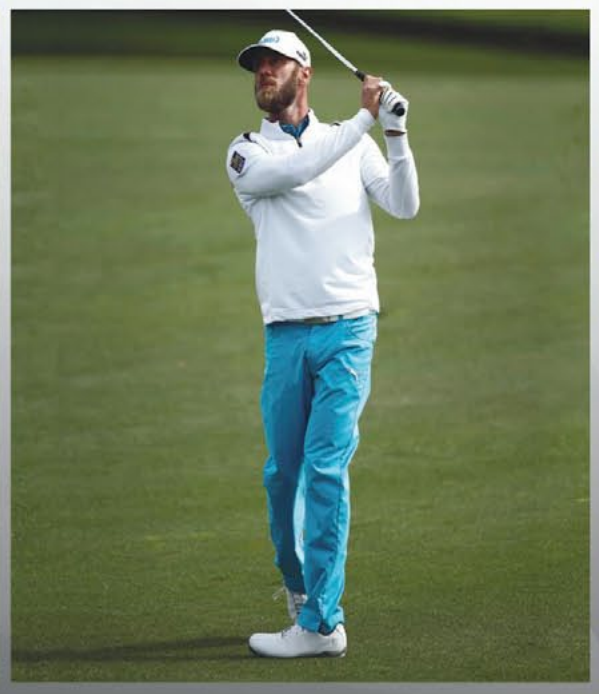

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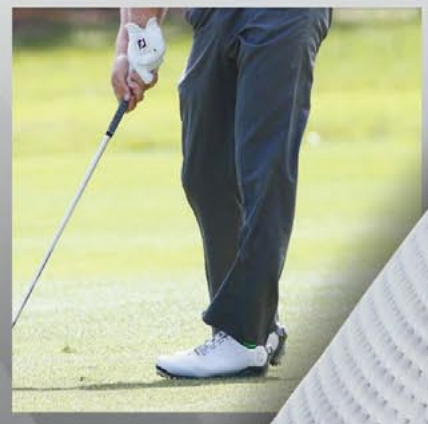


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Editor's Letter



BRAD CLIFTON
Editor-in-Chief



Robert Allenby: Golf's Greek Tragedy

A GREEK tragedy is defined as *a drama or literary work in which the main character is brought to ruin or suffers extreme sorrow, especially as a consequence of a tragic flaw, moral weakness, or inability to cope with unfavourable circumstances.*

Cue to one of Australia's most gifted yet polarising golfers ever, Robert Allenby.

Turn back the clock 25 years and Greg Norman was at the peak of his powers, but quickly rising up the amateur ranks was a young Victorian tipped to be the country's Next Big Thing. This kid had it all – the looks, the money, the swagger, a fearless putting stroke and the mongrel to take on the world. Robert Allenby was going to be a golf star, they said, and very quickly so.

A year after winning the 1990 Victorian Amateur title, Allenby looked likely to become the first amateur to win the Australian Open since Bruce Devlin until Wayne Riley sank a monster putt on 18 to pip the youngster by a shot at Royal Melbourne. The following year, Allenby turned professional and went on a rampage, winning titles and Australasian order of merit honours. He lifted the Stonehaven Cup in 1994 at Royal Sydney. In 1996, Allenby – by now regarded as one of the world's premier ballstrikers – saluted with three victories on the European Tour. Not even a horrific car crash in Spain a year later could derail his career. Allenby returned with a bang, securing his US PGA Tour card in 1998 before going on to win four times between 2000-2001 – a feat only topped in that period by the sport's two giants, Tiger Woods and Phil Mickelson.

Allenby's historic Triple Crown – winning the Australian Open, PGA and Masters on home soil in 2005 – hinted of a fairytale finish in the form of a major championship. Sadly, it didn't happen, and, according to one highly regarded Australian coach who spoke with AGD, never will.

So where did it all go horribly wrong for the high-flying Allenby? How did he wake up with his face bloodied and wallet pilfered after missing the cut at the Sony Open in Hawaii? Clearly he was the victim of something unsavoury ... there's no disputing that. But the disparities in the various published accounts of the alleged wine bar/strip club bender have done little to garner public support for the man ranked 27th on the US PGA Tour's career money list with more than $27 million to his name.

What brought on his disdain for the media? Allenby's follow-up press conference at the Phoenix Open was the perfect opportunity to rebuild some understanding and trust with journalists. Instead, the man whose world ranking had plummeted to No.285 chose to take potshots, declaring he only had one friend in the media (later believed to be Eddie McGuire).

There's no overlooking the fact that of all the American-based Aussies, Allenby has been arguably the biggest supporter of the Australasian tour since Greg Norman.

Off course, his work with the Challenge Cancer Network has changed lives and reveals a charitable man with a big heart.

And yet he comes across as a man mired in unhappiness. The signs of boorish behaviour have been obvious for some time: the sullen body language on the golf course, a penchant for sacking caddies and his propensity for public spats with tour players – Geoff Ogilvy, Mark Hensby, Paul Gow and Anthony Kim.

As with all Greek tragedies, there's a lesson for us all. And that is we must take responsibility for our own actions.

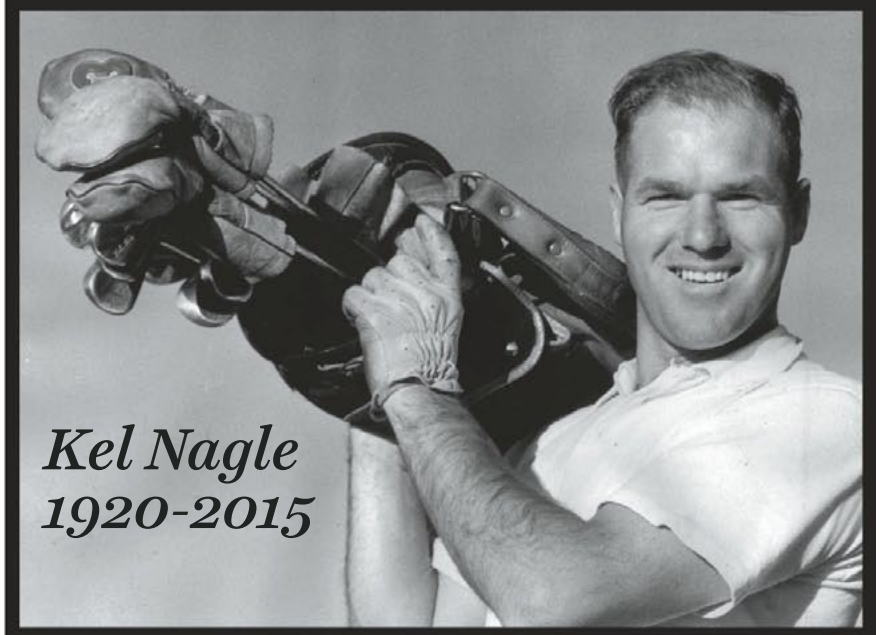
Vale – Kel Nagle

AUSTRALIAN golf lost one of its finest in late January with the passing of Kel Nagle at the age of 94.

Nagle was one of the PGA of Australia's most revered members for the past 75 years. His career is memorable for its accomplishments, which include a British Open, an Australian Open, two Canada Cups, six Australian PGA titles, seven New South Wales PGAs, seven New Zealand Opens and seven New Zealand PGAs. Nagle's outstanding performances in Australia and around the globe were formally recognised in 2007 when he received golf's highest honour – induction into the World Golf Hall of Fame. But his achievements are better appreciated when you consider that he first played the game at the age of 16, rediscovered it when he was 25 after serving in the Second World War, and reached the height of his powers between his 39th and 45th birthdays when he finally made the progression into an international touring professional. In the early 1970s, he laid claim to being the world's leading golfer over the age of 50.

Golf Australia boss Stephen Pitt spoke on behalf of the Australian golf community. "Kel was a giant of the game – he had an incredible record with wins at the British Open and Australian Open that make him a legend," he says. "But much more than that, he was an ambassador for his sport and his country, universally liked and admired by his peers. His victory in the 1960 Open Championship was one of the most memorable by any major champion – the way he did that will never be forgotten."

Kel Nagle was a gentleman. He will be sorely missed. RIP.



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• LETTER OF THE MONTH

Multi-memberships, the way forward?

I AM a keen, semi-regular golfer (once or twice a month) who over the past few years has taken to using discount golf vouchers on a number group buying websites. The reason is, I can experience a number of different courses with a mate and experience a course that I may join, all for the same price as a membership at my local course.

I'd say the main reason courses sell these vouchers is to increase patronage, while their membership numbers decrease.

What disappoints me the most is that many courses don't use these vouchers as the opportunity they are – an introduction to potential loyal customers. Pro shop attendants look at you in almost disgust that you are playing on their course for so cheap and not once have they asked for an email address to join a mailing list, offered something such as a discount off the next round, handed out a membership brochure or even the recorded my postcode for market research purposes.



Customer service is talked about a lot in the retail and hospitality industries and golf clubs should take a leaf from their book. A little work could go a long way to help increase their once solid membership numbers or, at the very least, increase the return patronage at their courses.

Tyrone Collins
Mt Annan, NSW

Still a work in progress

I ENJOYED reading Tony Webeck's "A Work in Progress" article in the December issue about the course changes at RACV Royal Pines Resort.

As a nearby resident, I've watched with interest the reconstruction of the front nine and must pay my compliments to the presentation of the course, particularly the new front nine.

In relation to the design changes, the front nine now appears much more interesting and challenging and I look forward to playing again soon.

From a spectator's point-of-view, however, the changes still leave something to be desired. I thought part of the brief was to make the course more spectator-friendly in relation to viewing and course access for the Australian PGA Championship. I'm disappointed that this has only partly been achieved and in some cases not improved at all.

While the fifth and seventh holes offer good viewing points around the greens, the viewing areas around the eighth and ninth greens are disappointing. Due to the large number of water hazards around the course, (that, ironically, don't come into play for the pros) the access around the course is restrictive for large galleries. As an attendee of many golf tournaments in Australia and the UK, I'm disappointed there was only a small electronic scoreboard, rather than the traditional big scoreboards with all player's scores displayed.

I look forward to the back nine changes and hope some fine-tuning can be done from a spectator's point-of-view before next year's tournament.

Alan Donaldson
Benowa, QLD



THIS MONTH'S WINNER!

Congratulations to Tyrone Collins who wins a Cobra Bio Cell Hybrid, courtesy of Cobra-PUMA Golf.

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EDITORIAL

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"Making half swings teaches good arm extension."

Ripping Irons

Keep your arms stretched to hit the ball flush

IF YOU want to boost the quality of your iron play, practise half shots with a 9-iron. Swing back to where your left arm is parallel to the ground, then swing through to where your right arm is parallel to the ground. The goal is to keep your left arm extended as you go back and both arms extended as you swing through, well past impact [*below*].

Keeping the arms stretched on both sides like this helps improve three critical facets of iron play: **(1) FACE CONTROL** It reduces the need to make any adjustments with your hands to square the face. **(2) SWING PATH** The club will travel more on the ideal in-to-out path in relation to the target line. **(3) COMPRESSION** The club will move on a downward angle even past impact, which promotes solid contact. Note: The divot I took here was in front of the ball's position at address. I hit down on it, and the ball jumped off the face.

FOLEY FILES

Should you be using a 4-iron instead of a hybrid? The answer is no, unless you can swing a long iron approaching the speeds we see on tour. For most players, the design of a hybrid makes it so much easier to hit a long, high shot with adequate spin, which is exactly why there are so many LPGA Tour players using them. If they're good enough for the pros, they're good enough for you.

Sean Foley is a Golf Digest Teaching Professional.



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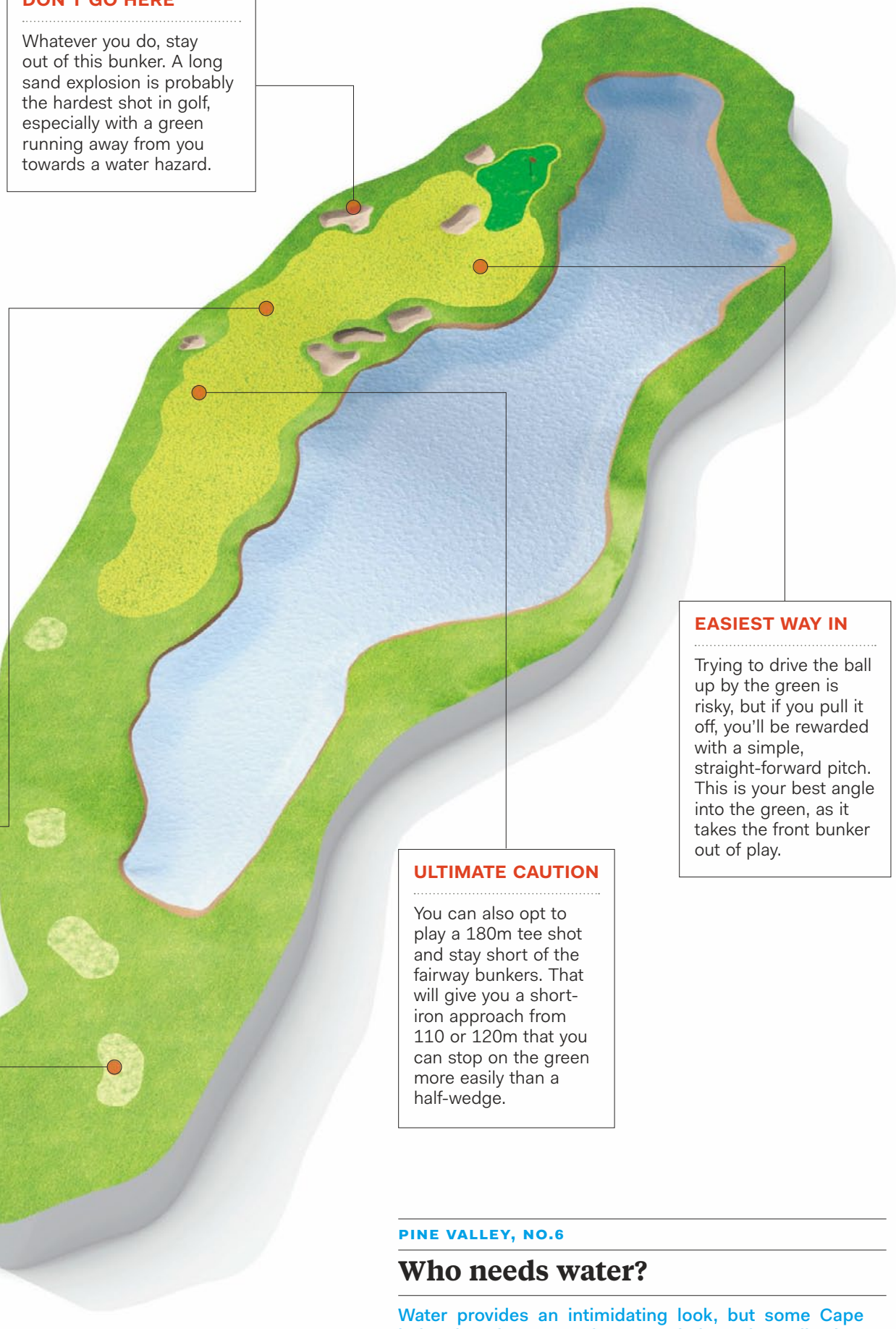


"The bigger the risk, the bigger the reward – if you pull it off."

Gut Check

Will you take on the water?

SOME people might call this a Cape hole because, like a geographical cape, part of the land juts into the water. But I simply call it the seventh hole at Ferry Point, a design of mine recently completed at the base of the Whitestone Bridge in the Bronx, with views of the New York City skyline. There are many famous holes that require comparable strategy, and I'd bet you've played a design like this somewhere. The seventh at Ferry Point is a relatively short hole, only 308 metres from the back tees, so a long drive can get you pretty close to the green. But it's a great risk-reward par 4.



DON'T GO HERE

Whatever you do, stay out of this bunker. A long sand explosion is probably the hardest shot in golf, especially with a green running away from you towards a water hazard.

PLAY LEFT FOR SAFETY

The farther left you go off the tee, the safer your drive will be. But then you'll have a tougher approach shot over the bunker in front of the green. Because the green is canted slightly to the right, you'll need to favour the left side on your approach.

THE BIG HITTER'S TEMPTATION

It's appealing to a long driver to go for the green. Even if you go into the water to the right of the putting surface, as long as your ball crossed dry land before going in, you can drop there, wedge on and still one-putt for par.

ULTIMATE CAUTION

You can also opt to play a 180m tee shot and stay short of the fairway bunkers. That will give you a short-iron approach from 110 or 120m that you can stop on the green more easily than a half-wedge.

EASIEST WAY IN

Trying to drive the ball up by the green is risky, but if you pull it off, you'll be rewarded with a simple, straight-forward pitch. This is your best angle into the green, as it takes the front bunker out of play.

PINE VALLEY, NO.6

Who needs water?

Water provides an intimidating look, but some Cape holes don't have any. The par-4 sixth at Pine Valley is a great example. That hole angles to the right, like the one illustrated here, but in place of the water is a large tract of unkempt sand and thick overgrowth. The penalty for a drive that doesn't carry this area can be worse than water because you might have to play your ball from the thick scrub or one of several deep bunkers that border it on the fairway side. That can lead to a big number.

CHARLEY RAUDENBUSH

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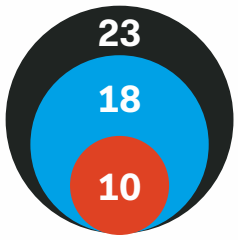


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Percentage of time an 80-shooter hits the green from 180 metres:
- From the rough (poor lie)
- From the rough (good lie)
- From the fairway

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Making It Rain?

How to stop popping up your tee shots

IF YOU'RE skying your drives and getting no roll, your angle of attack into the ball is too steep. That puts too much height and backspin on the shot. A telltale sign of this problem is when you have scuff marks on the top of your driver. Hitting down with your irons is good, but with the driver, you want to sweep it. Follow these steps to avoid the pop-up.

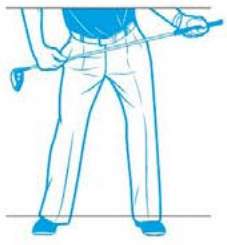
David Leadbetter runs 26 golf academies worldwide.

1. PLAY IT FORWARD



▸ **Too many players address the ball in the middle of their stance, as if they're playing an iron shot. This results in a downward blow and a pop-up. Instead, set up to the ball so it's aligned with your left armpit.**

2. RAISE YOUR LEFT HIP



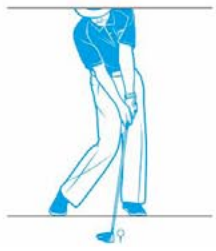
▸ **Get into a wider stance so your left hip is a couple of inches higher than your right. This will tilt your spine away from the target, encouraging your upper body to stay back so you can hit up on the ball.**

3. FINISH THE BACKSWING



▸ **To hit your driver solidly, it's important to wind up fully. Get your left shoulder to your chin. This will give your lower body a chance to initiate the downswing – a big factor in sweeping it off the tee.**

4. KEEP YOUR HEAD BACK



▸ **You want your torso turned away from the target as you swing down. This keeps your head back and allows you to whip your arms through impact. The upper body staying back is essential for an upward blow.**

BETTER
HAS ARRIVED.

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Viva Las Vegas!

Australian Veteran Golfers Association marks 50 years



GOLF VETS GET SET FOR HALF-CENTURY BASH

DUST off the golf clubs and the party poppers because the Australian Veteran Golfers Association (AVGA) is celebrating 50 years supporting senior golf in Australia.

The AVGA, which arranges golf tours and events in New Zealand, Thailand, China, Hawaii and Las Vegas for senior golfers who are members of clubs and have a Golf Australia handicap, has some exciting events on its 2015 calendar.

According to AVGA director Terry Sidwell, Las Vegas continues to be one of the most popular destinations for his members. "The concept of playing golf on beautifully manicured courses during the day and then being entertained at night by world-class performers like Rod Stewart and Human Nature has proved to be a big hit," says Sidwell.

One particular course a little over an hour out of Vegas that has left lasting impressions on Aussie visitors is Wolf Creek [*above*]. "How someone could build a course this dramatic in desert wasteland is incomprehensible," says Sidwell. "Golfers are in awe of the course and it becomes a memory of a lifetime. That is our goal – to try to provide our senior golfers with a memory of their golfing experience that they can look back on."

Celebrations on the local front will begin with the 36th Australian International Seniors Golf Championship from May 3-9 at Sanctuary Cove Resort on the Gold Coast.

The AVGA offers a variety of escorted tours for senior golfers. Sidwell says travellers enjoy pre-arranged itineraries and access to golf clubs they would not normally play, with "like-minded" people who share a common interest – golf. "The whole idea of playing with fellow seniors is to meet people who have similar values and have the opportunity to make lifetime friends," he says.

For more information on AVGA's 2015 tours and events, visit avga.com.au or phone (02) 9541 4178



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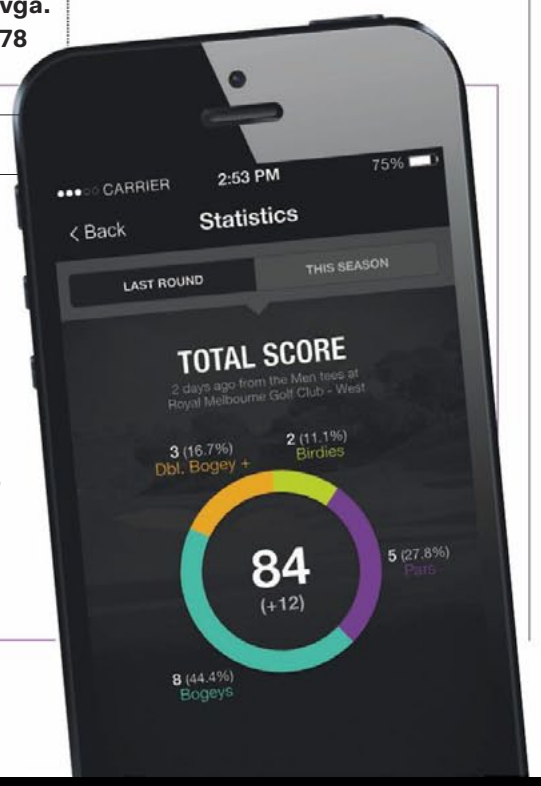
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"Try to create the same divot every time."

Command the Sand

A drill to take the guesswork out of bunkers



TAKING consistent sand divots is the key to playing well from greenside bunkers. If your clubhead enters the sand in the same spot behind the ball, you'll avoid hitting shots thin or too fat.

Here's a drill that promotes good bunker shots: Draw a line in the sand (you can lay a rake or clubshaft down to create a straight impression). This line represents your ball position. Without a ball, make some practice swings trying to hit one to three inches behind the line.

You want your divots to start in the same place each time, and they should also be a consistent length and depth.

An ideal divot for a typical greenside bunker shot is long and shallow – longer and shallower than most players think. The divot should start behind the line but extend well past it, as you see here [*above*].

After you practise taking divots this way, put five balls down in a line and try to enter the sand behind each ball at that spot you've been hitting.

See how close you come to making the same divots you created without a ball. That's how to develop consistency in the sand.

ELEMENTARY WATSON

I say to hit one to three inches behind the ball, but it depends on the sand's firmness. The harder the sand, the closer your club should get to the ball. If there's a practice bunker, I like to hit a few shots there to check the texture before going to the tee.

Tom Watson
is a Golf Digest Playing Editor.

POLO GOLF: SHIRT, PANTS • G/FORE: GLOVE

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Commitment Issues

When every driver looks like 'the one'

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First, you'll get fitted by a pro. There's plenty of good clubfitters in Australia and I bet there's one near you. Major golf stores now offer fitting services, too. Secondly, promise you'll give the new club a fair trial. It's not a good idea to base your fondness for your driver solely on how you're swinging at the time of purchase. Put in some time with your new toy – a month, at least. If you still think you need an adjustment, head back to your fitter.

You're not stuck once you rip off all the stickers.

5 SIGNS THAT YOU'RE SPENDING TOO MUCH TIME ON THE RANGE

1. You see a cart on the course and try to hit it.
2. More than once, you've pulled out range tokens to buy coffee.
3. All your clubs have a green film peeling off the bottom.
4. You mark your ball with a red circle all the way around. (Two circles for tournaments.)
5. The large bucket at KFC seems very doable to you.

Tom Stickney II teaches at Bighorn Golf Club in Palm Desert, California, and The Promontory Club in Park City, Utah.

ILLUSTRATION: BOB ECKSTEIN • ADIDAS: SHIRT, PANTS, SHOES, HAT • TAYLORMADE: GLOVE

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Smooth Operator

Why you should ditch the swing thoughts and focus on tempo

ASK any tour player what they were thinking about during a great round and they will tell you, "nothing".

Professional golfers concentrate more on rhythm than any particular swing thought when out on the course. They go through their swing process on the range and then take it to the course with a clear mind.

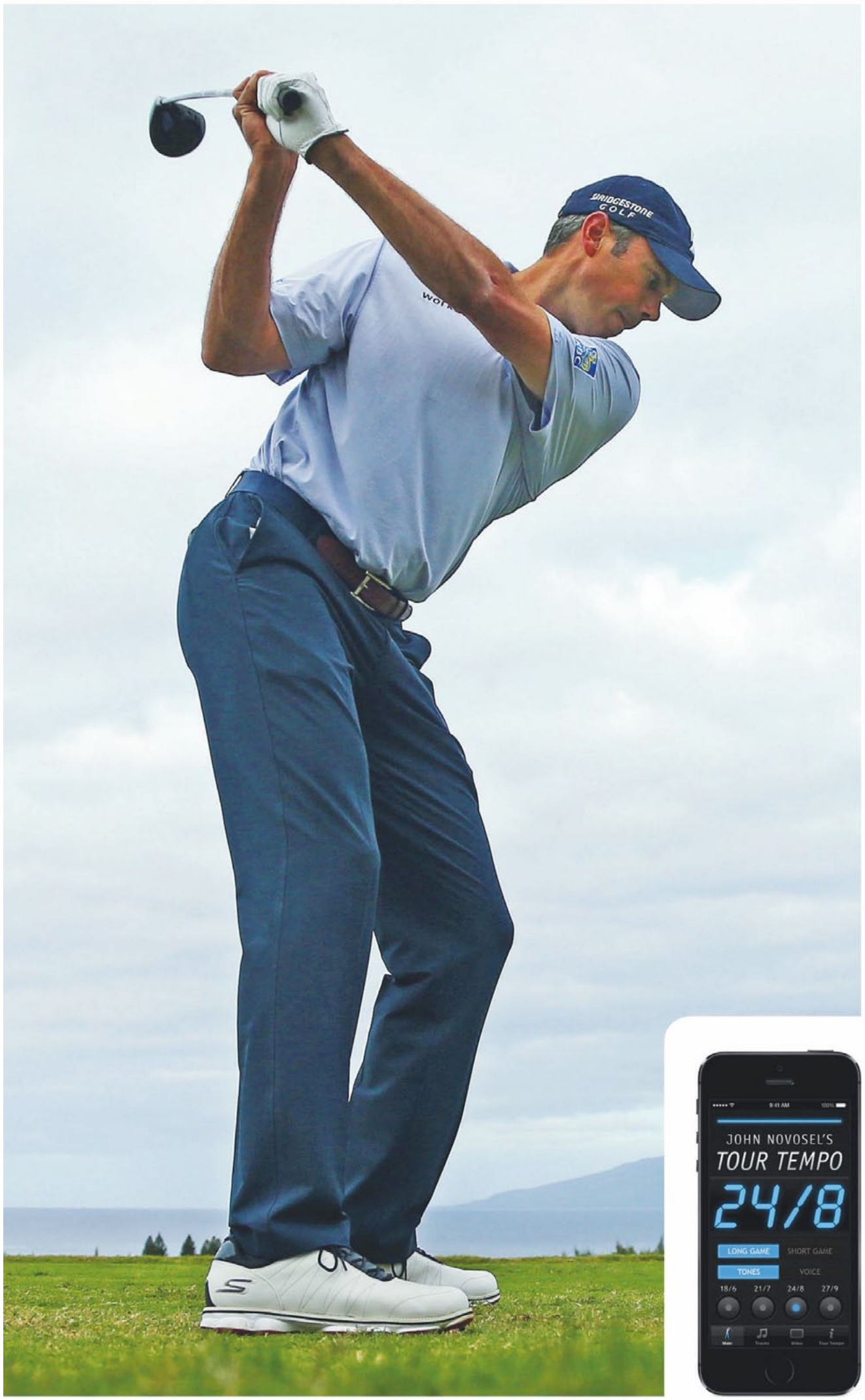
To help my clients with their swing tempo, I use the Tour Tempo app by John Novosel.

The best rhythm for your golf swing is a ratio of 3 to 1, three parts back and one part down. This is shown on the app as 21/7, 24/8 and 27/9 (explained in more detail in the app introduction).

It is better to work on your rhythm on the range and be free of any swing thoughts while you are playing. This app will allow you to work on your rhythm. When you find the correct rhythm for your swing it will help you maintain a consistent movement that will hold up in a pressure situation.

The next time you are on the range, go through your usual routine and work on your tempo. You will find that your ball striking will become more consistent and you won't be thinking about a thing.

If you would like to know more about your swing tempo, email me at **Jason@jasonlawsgolf.com**



◂ American money-making machine Matt Kuchar is a great example of a tour player relying on a smooth swing tempo to play consistently well. Inset: The Tour Tempo app by John Novosel is a great tool for finding your ideal swing tempo on the range.

GETTY IMAGES

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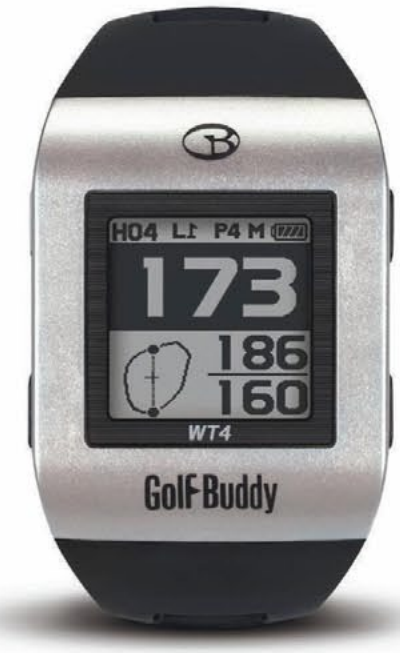
▾ The Apex UT has a thin face like the company's fairway woods to increase ball speed. The forged face construction is designed to improve distance, even on off-centre strikes.

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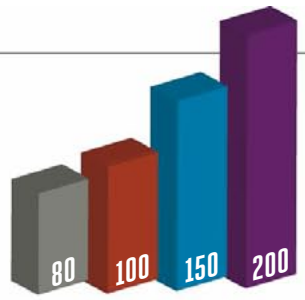




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At what distance, playing from the fairway, do golfers hit the green half the time?

- Tour player
- 80-shooter
- 90-shooter
- 100-shooter

SOURCE: SHOTBYSHOT.COM



Avoid These Ego Mistakes

One from the fairway, one by the green

THE two most common mistakes I see amateurs make are: Not taking enough club into the green and using too much loft around the green – both ego mistakes. Everybody wants to hit the ball farther, and everybody loves that soft little pitch shot that nuzzles up to the pin. But reality has to trump your wish list.

Here's my advice: Take an extra club on approach shots and swing within yourself. You'll hit the ball solid more often if you go at 75 per cent instead of 100. Trust me, your swing will be mechanically better at a speed you can support.

Around the greens, don't just grab your lob wedge. Let the lie and the amount of green you have to work with dictate the club you pick. Then you can use the same swing for most greenside shots. In other words, you're changing clubs, not your swing, to hit different shots.

BUTCH'S BASICS

Even when they're pitching with a wedge, most golfers try to help the ball up with a flip of the hands. This is a killer, because it drops the swing's low point behind the ball and leads to chunks and skulls. Here's a good rule: Return the loft. Whatever club-face loft you start with at address, return that loft at impact. To do it, keep your hands leading the clubhead and turn through the shot.

Butch Harmon
is a Golf Digest Teaching Professional.

FOOTJOY: SHIRT, SHOES • TITLEIST: HAT, GLOVE

STEPHEN SZURLEJ

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"Even tour players hate hitting a short shot over water."

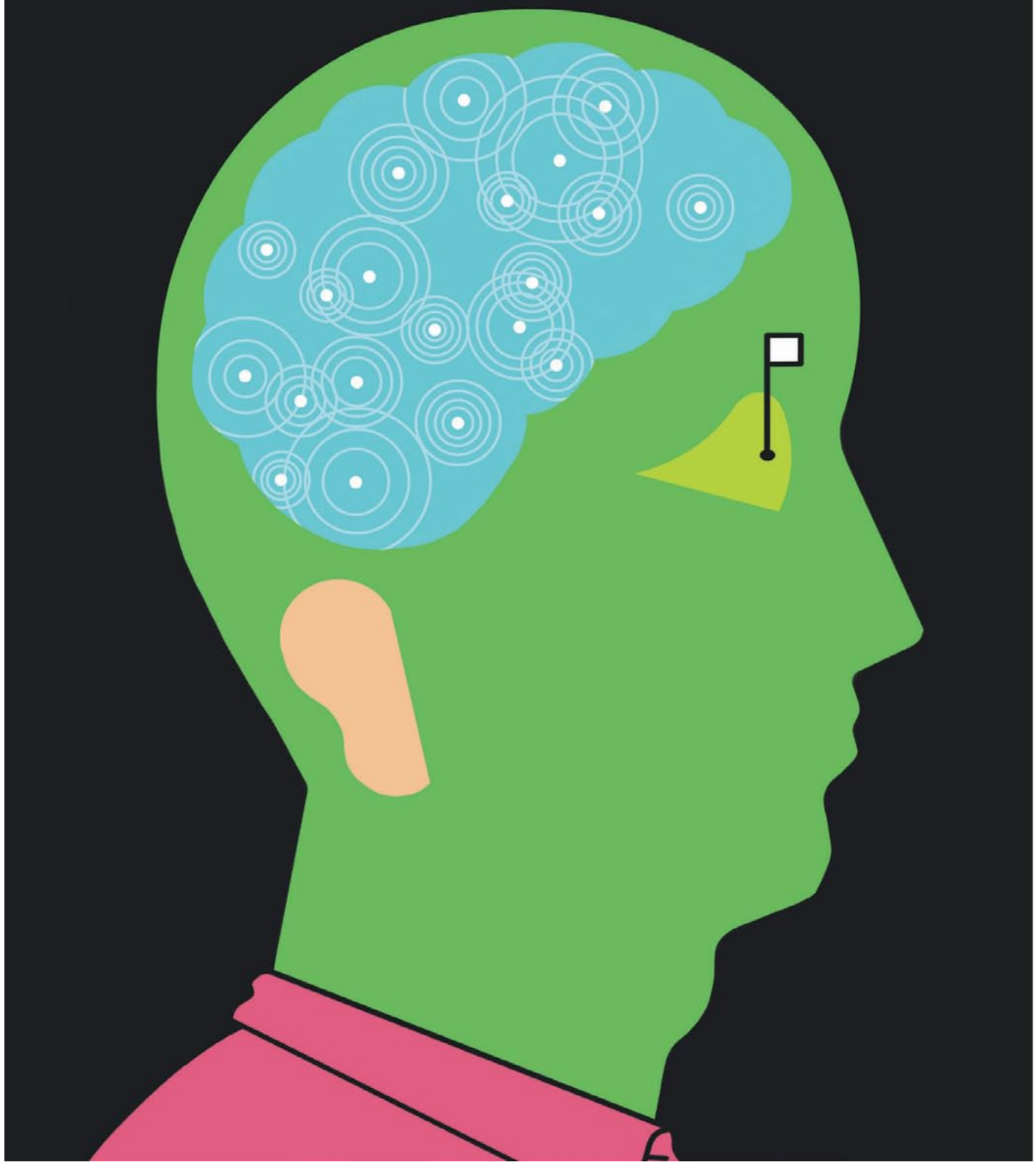
Why'd I Do That?

Simple shot, but in the water you go

YOU'VE got a short approach over a pond. Just a 9-iron or wedge. Without the water, you'd be thinking about birdie. But you get over the ball and anxiety creeps in. Sure enough – *splash*. Now you have to drop another and face the same shot again.

Nobody likes thinking about this. Even tour players hate hitting a short shot over water. What you need to do is ensure you make solid contact. Here are a few keys: (1) Take the shortest club and make the fullest swing for the distance. For example, a full 56-degree wedge over an easy 54. (2) Put more weight on your left foot, and keep it there throughout the swing. (3) Stay in your posture by keeping your head steady. (4) Turn through the shot with some speed, and release the club *through* the ball, not *at* the ball.

Rick Smith is a Golf Digest Teaching Professional.





HEAD SPINNING?

When you dunk a ball in the water, the tendency is to get flustered. Try not to. Figure out if the reason was poor technique or poor thinking. If it's the latter, reset your brain. Remember, you have to hit the shot again, so take a deep breath and visualise the ball flying in the air, landing and rolling to the hole. Also, consider doing something different: Aim at another spot, play a different shot, change clubs. Try to get a fresh look.



McDOWELL'S UNLUCKY 13

In the third round of last year's US PGA Championship at Valhalla Golf Club, Graeme McDowell came to the 311-metre 13th hole playing solid golf. But No.13 has water in front, left and right of the green. After a perfect tee shot, McDowell chunked his wedge into the water. Then he rinsed another one. His third attempt found the green, but he was on his way to making an 8. "It's a card-wrecker, a tournament-wrecker, a weekend-wrecker," McDowell said.

FLAGSTICK: BEN WISEMAN • MCDOWELL: MATT YORK/GETTY IMAGES

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Bonville Booming

How an improbable dream became one of the success stories of Australian golf

OF ALL the great success stories in Australian golf over the past 25 years, Bonville Golf Resort ranks among the best.

The popular resort isn't just surving. It's thriving.

It was built in the early 1990s on the western side of the Pacific Highway, 10 minutes south of Coffs Harbour. Back then, there was nothing more than a petrol station, a caravan park and a fruit stall, but Bonville's stunning and unique setting has transformed into a haven for golf groups and a treasured home for its members.

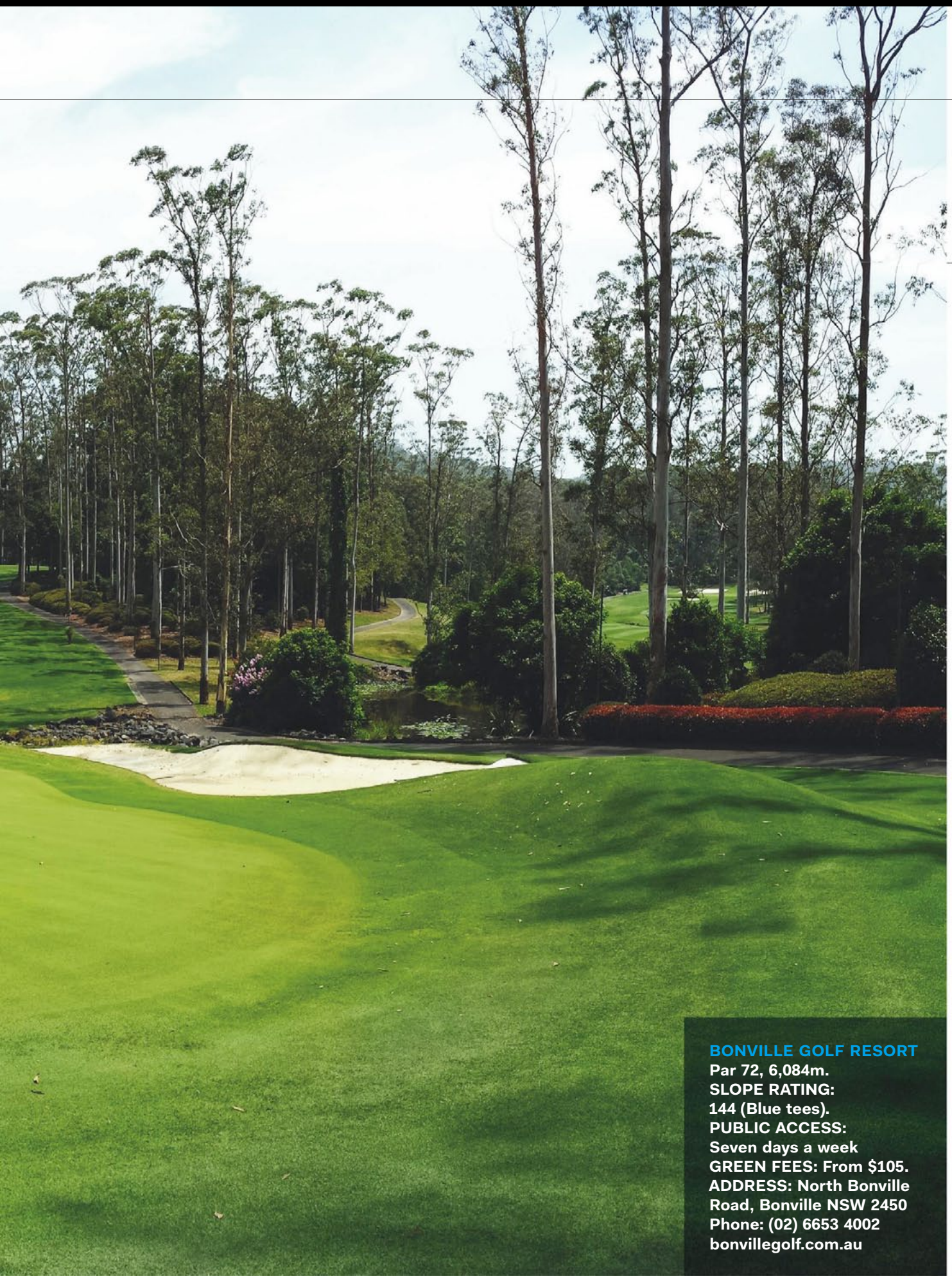
Even the global financial crisis couldn't halt Bonville's progress, with the resort posting its best ever monthly result in October 2013. A month later, they bettered that mark again. In October last year, just weeks before AUSTRALIAN GOLF DIGEST paid a visit, Bonville set a new mark in monthly turnover, a remarkable achievement as many clubs struggle to make ends meet.

As someone who spent his formative years on the Coffs coast, the development of Bonville has been one I have followed with caution as well as pride. An international golf resort in Bonville? A brave move by Australian and Japanese investors to say the least.

Like any new golf course, the development has not been without its difficulties, the most pressing being the impact of shading on the playing surfaces caused by the avenues of towering gum trees. Due to ongoing improvements to turf management practices, this problem has now been eliminated and I am pleased to report that in my 20 years of visits to Bonville I have never seen the overall turf presentation as good as it was late last year.

Fellow Coffs Harbour boy and three-time Japan Golf Tour winner, Paul Sheehan was in on the Bonville experience from day one and says that even upon his most recent visit, it has retained its magical quality.

"I remember playing there



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when the holes were there but the course hadn't opened. and going, 'Wow'. Then we had the opening day and we took off on helicopter flights from the 18th fairway. We got an aerial view of the course and it was pretty cool to see how magic the place was," Sheehan recalls, whose first victory as a professional happened to be the PGA-sanctioned Bonville Celebrity Classic in 2000, a tournament he was only granted entry in by virtue of being a local.

"What's unique with Bonville, when you're on the golf course you feel like you're the only one out there. Because each hole is separate you feel like you're the only person on the course, which is pretty cool."

Sheehan firmly believes the greens are a whole lot better now and the bunkering is vastly improved. "They've obviously made a real effort with the bunkers and there have just been little improvements here and there with the flattening out of greens where there used to be areas of run-off," says Sheehan. "Overall it's just a lot fairer than it used to be.

"Golf is about fun and being memorable. Bonville is certainly that. When you come around the corner at 18 and you see that clubhouse, that's pretty much what Bonville's all about, right there. That's what I always remember and look forward to seeing."

If you were one of the many thousands of people who played at Bonville upon its opening in 1992, the golf course you play today has changed little in terms of routing. The picturesque par-3 spare hole (originally known as 17B) is now a permanent part of the round with the short par-4 second making way, but the rest of the design remains largely unchanged.

There is slow, but steady, progress on a significant residential development surrounding the Bonville Golf Resort and that will have no impact on the existing layout. General manager Brad Daymond says the key to Bonville receiving Australia's Leading Golf Resort title by the World Travel Awards – four times – is continued improvements ahead of drastic changes.

"Our philosophy is to incrementally improve our overall offering on a daily basis," explains Daymond, who has been a fixture at Bonville since its opening. "We have had this strategy for the past 15 years and it has been extremely rewarding watching all aspects of the property improve progressively over that time frame.

"In the early years (mid 1990s) many golfers would use Bonville as a 'stopover' on their way from Sydney to the Gold Coast. As the years went by and the property continued to improve, many of these groups changed their routine and started to stop more frequently and in many cases made Bonville their official destination for their golfing trip. Many of these groups are now 'rusted-on' supporters of Bonville and have been visiting the property on an annual basis for the past 15 to 20 years.

"We achieve so much repeat business because, I believe, of the overall offering at Bonville – the 'wow' factor of the golf course, the food and beverage experience, the accommodation overlooking the first hole and the customer service all over the property."

But what makes Bonville so special? You'll just have to visit yourself with an iron-clad guarantee from us that you won't be disappointed.

© TONY WEBECK

Rachel Returns

An Aussie great is back on the fairways after taking time out to become a mum

TEN-time tournament winner Rachel Hetherington has made a shock comeback as a golfing mum of 42. With husband Greg Ritchie, the former Test batsman, as her caddie, Hetherington's new plunge into tour life is all about the challenge and competitive excitement after her 2010 retirement from 14 years of duelling with the world's best in the US.

"I've never stopped loving golf, I just had my attention happily diverted and got busy starting a family and a golf range business," says Hetherington. "Bringing up a toddler has made me more adaptable in a good way, that's for sure. I know there is only a certain, short time every day I can concentrate on golf but I'm enjoying hitting balls again and working on my golf swing. Getting out to play rounds to build distance control with my irons and getting my short game where I want it to be are the biggest things now."

Hetherington said she relishesd coaching juniors at the Rachel Hetherington Golf Range on the Tweed Coast. As co-owner with Ritchie, it also means everything she needs for a successful comeback is at her fingertips with two chipping greens, a putting green, driving bays and fellow instructor-cum-coach Randall Hollands-Smith.

The "no-golf-clubs-in-the-house" rule applies equally to daughter Annie, 3, and Ritchie, a self-confessed 'golf nut' who plays off a five handicap at Coolangatta & Tweed Heads Golf Club.

"She has a little driver and 7-iron leaning up against the wall any time she wants to have a swing but riding bikes and scooters are her thing at the moment," says Hetherington. "Greg's humour is a good balancing thing for me on the course if I get a bit grumpy at not playing well. He's going to caddie for me in the pro-ams and he'll be there for Annie when we are juggling babysitters."

Hetherington won eight events and more than $5 million on the lucrative LPGA Tour between 1998-2003. Her competitive steel under pressure was highly regarded because three of those titles were won in play-offs against Sweden's Annika Sorenstam when she ruled women's golf. "I was really fortunate to play when Annika, Karrie (Webb), Laura Davies, Meg Mallon, Helen Alfredsson and others were at the top because they were not only great players, but part of a great era where you were so able to learn from them too," says Hetherington. "Karrie's happy about an old bird like me making a comeback. I think she just wants to see someone older than her (40) in fields in Australia.

"I do believe my past experiences in golf will help me. I feel I'm hitting the ball better and more consistently now, but it's taking that on course and into events."

▸ Rachel Hetherington all smiles with husband Greg Ritchie and daughter Annie after announcing her comeback to the ALPG Tour.

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Aussies of the Month

Cameron Davis and Shelly Shin

THE Sydney teenagers warded off a spirited challenge from international competitors and homegrown talent to capture Australian Amateur titles in their home city.

Davis, 19, survived a tough week at The Australian Golf Club, eventually prevailing over New Zealand's Tyler Hodge to win the matchplay final of the Australian Men's Amateur Championship with a birdie on the 37th hole.

The Monash Country Club member has rededicated himself to golf after a humbling trip to America in 2014. He recently won the Victorian Amateur and set a course record-equalling 63 on Royal Melbourne's West Course during the Master of the Amateurs.

Shin stamped herself as the top amateur in the country by capturing the Australian Women's Amateur in a battle of the teenagers. The 16-year-old from Concord Golf Club defeated Lizzie Elmassian, 18, by the convincing margin of 8&7 in their 36-hole decider.

Shin is the only remaining amateur from the Australian side that won the women's title at the 2014 World Amateur Team Championships in Japan. She has taken her game to another level since the departures of Minjee Lee and Su Hyun Oh into the pro ranks, winning the Lake Macquarie Women's Amateur Championship in early January.

With three of the four Australian Amateur finalists from NSW, it's a sign the state is back on track with its development following the appointment of Golf NSW national coach Dean Kinney.



2015 Australian Amateur champions, Shelly Shin and Cameron Davis



They've Done What?

Golf Australia, Football Federation Australia and FootGolf Australia have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to work together and promote FootGolf. The sport is played the same way as golf on a golf course, except that players kick a football towards a larger cup. FootGolf, which originated in Europe in 2009, is said to be a tremendous opportunity for golf facilities to increase revenue and attract potential golfers.

HEADLINERS



• **ROBERT ALLENBY:** Received notoriety from his story of being abducted, robbed and bashed after enjoying drinks with friends at Amuse Wine Bar in Waikiki, Hawaii.

• **JOHN HOPKINS:** Awarded an Order of Australia Medal. The 64-year-old chairman *[above]* of Golf Australia was recognised for his services to golf and the mineral and resources sector.

• **TODD SINNOTT:** Turned professional after a second-place finish at Qualifying School for the PGA Tour of Australasia. The 22-year-old Victorian's decision follows an impressive summer when he led the Australian Masters and Australian Open, and played alongside Rory McIlroy, Adam Scott, Jordan Spieth, Steven Bowditch and Boo Weekley.

• **ZACH MURRAY:** The 17-year-old Victorian beat an accomplished field to win the Master of the Amateurs at Royal Melbourne.

• **ED STEDMAN:** Regained his status on the PGA Tour of Australasia by taking medallist honours in the final stage of Qualifying School at Victoria Golf Club.

• **THE NATIONAL GOLF CLUB AND LONG ISLAND COUNTRY CLUB:** Underwent a merger after members of The National strongly backed a proposal to create the first 72-hole private golf club in Australia.

• **STEVE AYLES:** Appointed as chief commercial officer at the PGA of Australia. Ayles most recently worked as commercial executive for the International Tennis Federation.

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Escape to Magenta...

Set amongst some of the most inspiring and unspoilt surroundings on a pristine peninsular between Tuggerah Lakes and the Pacific Ocean on the NSW Central Coast and just 90 minutes drive from Sydney's CBD, is The Pullman Magenta Shores Resort 5 star beachfront spa resort and Magenta Shores Golf & Country Club, a private and exclusive Ross Watson designed championship 18-hole golf course.



Magenta Golf offers members and guests an opportunity to play a unique and challenging golf course. Golfers can enjoy magnificent ocean views from the front 9-holes, with the back 9-holes adjacent to the rainforest and National Parks.

Rated number 26 in the Australian Golf Digest's Top 100 Courses for 2014, playing Magenta is to experience a golf club of pure indulgence and a culture of ultimate luxury and elegance, offering not only a unique location and golfing experience but also excellence in facilities and services for golfers of all levels.

The Resort itself features contemporary Studio Guestrooms and 1, 2 and 3 bedroom Villas with open plan living and dining areas plus private furnished courtyards or balconies overlooking the pool, golf course or gardens.

Facilities include Barretts Restaurant and Shallows Bar with al-fresco dining, Vie Spa, indoor heated pool and steam room, rock pools, lagoon pool and lagoon pool bar (seasonal), gym, BBQ picnic areas and 2 tennis courts, making it ideal for couples, families and social groups.

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There was no golf, as secretly planned, but the Daddos still lived it up on holiday.

The Daddos Do Thailand

Beautiful islands, historic temples, wonderful wildlife and ... golf?

AH, THE best laid plans.

The Daddo tribe holidayed recently, for the first time in ages. It was the big trip – over land and sea, down river, up stream with temples and history and staggeringly cheap beer.

I honestly hadn't planned to golf. Not openly, anyway.

If I played, it would be because an un-missable opportunity presented itself: A never-to-be-repeated chance to play a once-in-a-lifetime game in a place of revered and impossible beauty and circumstance.

I could have manufactured such a moment in Thailand's Chiang Mai. To be honest, when we came into land it was dark and a golf course was lit up below us like a dazzling theme park. I had time to count the holes, see the water and the bunkering and wonder if I could hit a ball above the lighting towers.

"Coulda, woulda, shoulda." Chiang Mai offered so many golfing alternatives; I put it on my list of 'next times'. How do you put golf above temples and elephants and tigers and cycling and shopping? You can't, really.

Chiang Khong had no golf course, but it was very funky and the first place I've had the chance to knock back a rat for dinner. The frog wasn't so lucky.

The mighty Mekong river between Chiang Khong and Laos' Luang Prabang may have had golf, but no one was talking about it. And while Luang Prabang definitely had a golf course, we just got so dang busy doing Laos stuff I silently suggested to myself that Cambodia's Siem Reap would be the place.

Mooooohahahahaha to that.

Mr Phath, legendary guide from Travel Indochina, took us on arguably the best tour of the should-be seven wonders of the world. You know Angkor Wat and Angkor Thom? Of course you do, it's where they made the temple part of Tomb Raider.

It was the dawn part of our Four Temples in One Day tour, and it was bewildering and stunning and magnificent. Somehow, Mr Phath managed to get us into the temple before dawn – when no one else was there. If you've spent any time on the Asian tourism trail in peak season, you'll appreciate how phenomenal this was.

There is good golf in Cambodia, but to take a day out of being with such beautiful people seemed a travesty. Obviously the travel Gods were saving my golfing chance for Phuket.

You beauty. If you believe 80 per cent of the positive affirmationists on Facebook, if you want something bad enough, well you can bloody well have it.

I had to be careful, though. We were at Karon Beach, staying at the Novotel. It's like an oasis, really. This is epic family holiday material: three pools, a waterslide, enormous buffet breakfast and the opportunity to try and beat the world champion pool lounge reservers at their own game.

There was easily enough time to golf. Acclimatise by the pools, quiet day at Phi Phi Islands to act out scenes from The Beach (I do look like Leo DiCaprio if you squint hard enough), a day at Karon beach, sightseeing and then a day on the course. Easy. Exciting. No problem. While the kids are making trains in the waterslide, they won't even miss me.

After an early ocean swim I went back to the kids' room because there was a chance my wife would be asleep. Besides, it interconnected with ours. I knocked. Nothing. "*Ugh*." Some days. After a few stabs on the doorbell, I heard movement.

The door opened far enough to push against the security chain, and all I noticed of my eldest daughter was that she was in a Novotel robe and had just woken up, which was weird, because she'd been awake when I left. *Hmm*, teenagers, eh?

So she fiddled about with the chain, for ages. I became impatient and rapped on the door again. I mean, geez, I'm in my sluggos dripping in the hallway, and she can't figure out the security chain. What if there's a fire? What's she going to do then? I banged on the door again. "Bibs, let's go. Geez. It's not that hard."

Rattle, scratch, fiddle, from behind the door. Drip, drip, drip on my side.

"I'll go to our door. Just go to the other door," I say, with a final, frustrated parental slap on the door.

Then the door opened. I was looking at the ground, of course, because it's what dads do when they're perplexed. As I looked up, I realised quite quickly it wasn't my daughter at all, but a young lady who was the same size as my daughter with the same coloured hair and, oh, God. "Sorry, wrong room," I said. "Ha-ha! Doh!"

Anyone could have made that mistake, right? Right room, wrong floor? So I headed for golf because I didn't want her to run into the perve in the speedos.

I got a map and a moped. I had it sorted, pretty much. Knew where I was going. Even had time to stop and buy a genuine four-dollar 'Rolph Loren' polo and shorts.

There's a reason everyone loves Thailand, and places like Phuket – beautiful people, scenery and bargains. It's paradise. I love it.

If only I'd found the golf course.

Find **Andrew Daddo** at getafreakinlife.com



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It may be that Tiger reinvents himself in a new guise, more tactician than aggressor, and finds a way to play around any deficiencies.





GETTY IMAGES

2015: Year of the Tiger?

Why golf needs its No.1 drawcard back fit and firing

FOR those of you wondering, 2015 is the Chinese Year of the Sheep. However, it is another seven years until the 'Year of the Tiger' rolls around once again. The question is, can the world of golf wait that long?

This year Tiger Woods turns up for work on the US PGA Tour after an extended injury layoff. That should read, 'another' injury layoff, as time convalescing after surgery has become something of a constant for the former world No.1. And as has been the case since he exploded onto the scene at the 1997 US Masters – whether he is the healthy, muscular Tiger of 2000 or the infirm, broken bodied version of 2014 – his name is still the one on everyone's lips. It's the name that sells magazines, that drives TV ratings and brings crowds through the gate. And it is the only name that transcends the sport; golf needs Tiger, and a healthy one especially.

At this stage, no one has a handle on how successful Tiger's rebuilding process has been. This time around, the recovery has been for back surgery, one of the more troubling parts of the body to be tinkering with. On its own, such an injury would be a significant hurdle to overcome. But Tiger's body carries the burden of numerous bouts of invasive surgery, including a suggested five surgeries on his left knee, Achilles tendon issues in both legs and recurring neck and elbow pain.

From my experience, the introduction of injury into the performance equation introduces variables particularly difficult to get on top of, both physically and mentally. Injuries that require surgery are another step up altogether. Regardless of the skill and artistry of the surgeon, my assertion is the body is, simply, never quite the same again. When you take the generative effects of age (keeping in mind that Woods is approaching 40 years) on already suspect working parts and combine them with the unnatural and joint wrenching movement that is the golf swing, you need glasses with a deeply rosy tint to see Tiger recapturing career-best form.

By the end of my professional career, I had tallied up five surgeries – two on my left shoulder, two on my right knee, and one on my right wrist. For the last two years I competed, I didn't play a single tournament round without painkillers or anti-inflammation drugs. At the end it was a daily cocktail of both as the law of diminishing returns began to take hold. I was no Tiger, to be fair, but nonetheless a capable enough professional to keep my card in Australia for more than a decade and to compete at a solid level internationally. I was still reasonably competitive when I decided to retire in 2005, but it had become obvious that the battle with my body was not a fight I was going to win. Joint fatigue at the end of rounds started to become a factor, particularly with my knee, and changing my gait to compensate for it only served to ignite lower back problems. Spot fires became bushfires, and I was at first unable, and then unwilling, to put them out.

As fit and as dedicated as Tiger is, it is hard to imagine that he is ever going to be the free flowing, course-shredding machine we held in awe nearly 20 years ago. Maybe he doesn't need to be. It could be that Tiger at 80 per cent is still good enough to hold his own amongst the mere mortals of the US PGA Tour. It may be that he reinvents himself in a new guise, more tactician than aggressor, and finds a way to play around any deficiencies. Little would surprise when it comes to a man who has spent his life rewriting possibility. The golfing world waits in keen anticipation.

The Hole Truth

Why courses punch their fairways and greens

FOR many, there is nothing more annoying in golf than turning up to play a course that's just had its greens cored and sanded. The game isn't quite the same. Although a necessary part of the maintenance regime, few golfers truly understand the aeration process and why it is undertaken at their golf course.

The technical justification for pulling turf plugs out of greens or fairways and back filling with sand is to reduce thatch (sponginess), remove excess organic matter (which is detrimental to turf grass), relieve compaction, increase root stimulation and allow air and water to move through the growing medium. It also creates space for the addition of soil amendments, such as sand or wetting agents. The more practical explanation, however, is that it enables superintendents to present golfers with smoother and superior playing surfaces. The 3-4 weeks of pain felt while the turf recovers from coring pales by comparison to the those benefits in the longer term.

To learn more about aeration, we spoke to a couple of leading Australian golf course superintendents. **Dan Brown** is an experienced turf manager now working in Vietnam. He's worked in various climates and with various turf species and describes how different grass types require different aeration programs.

"The warm season turf grasses of Northern NSW and Queensland require more maintenance because of the high rainfall, humidity and prolonged hot temperatures," he says. "Turf in those areas grow much quicker than turf in south-east Australia. The cool season grasses found on most courses in Victoria and Tasmania require less maintenance because their period of growth is much shorter. The cold winters almost put these grass varieties to sleep, coming alive in spring, doing its best to get through a hot summer before enjoying the spoils of autumn."

Brown explains there are many different aerification methods, and some provide great results with minimal disruption to play. These include Verti-draining, or punching with small solid tines, slicing, spiking and water injection.

According to **Simon Muller**, Superintendent at The Dunes Golf Links near Melbourne, the primary benefit of all aeration techniques is "to create temporary pore space in the soil, which allows for water movement, gas exchange, root growth and the addition of soil amendments."

"If excess water cannot be rapidly removed, the site would be water-logged, soggy, exhibit low soil aeration, and be unstable for traffic," says Muller. "Also, irrigation watering is not efficient if water cannot penetrate into the soil surface, resulting in high runoff and evaporation losses of water.

"Pore spaces are the channels through which oxygen moves from the atmosphere into the soil and for soil-generated gases (carbon dioxide, hydrogen sulfide, methane, etc.) to dissipate into the atmosphere. Root cells require oxygen for cell respiration for survival."

Although some readers might need convincing, golfer inconvenience is a very real consideration for course supers and the frequency of aeration depends on many factors, including turf species, weather conditions and (crucially) whether the course is private or public access.

As Brown points out, whatever the aeration method or program, the key to presenting good golf turf is sound management. "Over-watering and over-fertilising is a recipe for disaster, and a vicious cycle that leads to soft, thatch, diseased and uninteresting golf – and more disruption of play due to constant aerification," he says.

More disruption and more aerification – nobody wants that.

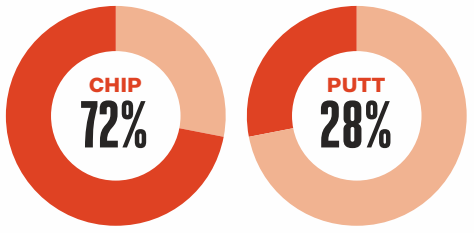
Darius Oliver is a golf course design consultant and the author of Planet Golf and Planet Golf USA, which are available via planetgolf.com.au



ILLUSTRATION BY SHOUT

Five metres off the green in the fairway, you'll most likely . . .

SOURCE: GOLF DIGEST READERS (WHEN WILL THEY LEARN?)





Better Watch Your Grass!

How well do you know your turf rules?

MOST of you know that you don't get free relief if your ball ends up in a divot **(RULE 13-2)**. But can you rub your hand on the putting green before you putt? Or can you clip the tops of fescue grass while making practice swings in a water hazard? Here are 11 turf-related rules situations to mow through before your next round.

1. Your club is grounded when the grass beneath it is compressed enough to support the club's weight. If the ball moves after that, it's a one-stroke penalty, and the ball must be replaced **(RULE 18-2b)**. Note: You can also be penalised before you ground the club if you cause the ball to move.

2. If your ball is perched on top of some grass and descends into the blades when you address it, it's a one-stroke penalty, and the ball must be replaced. **(RULE 18-2, DECISION 18/1)**

3. If you step on your ball in the rough while searching for it, it's a one-stroke penalty. Replace the ball. **(RULE 18-2)**

4. To take free relief for a ball embedded in the turf, it has to be in its pitch mark and at least partially below ground level. It also has to be embedded in an area of the course where the grass is cut to fairway height or less. This includes paths in the rough. **(RULE 25-2, DECISION 25-2/0.5)**

5. If grass clippings are piled for removal, you may treat the area as ground under repair and take free relief. But that relief doesn't apply to loose grass clippings or piles that aren't intended to be removed. **(DECISION 25/11)**

6. You can make practice swings in a water hazard that clip the tops of reeds, plants or grass. Just don't ground your club. **(NOTE TO RULE 13-4)**

7. You may ground your club before playing from a grass-covered area within a bunker. **(DEFINITIONS)**

8. Don't remove sand or loose turf from the area in which you intend to drop. **(RULE 13-2)**

9. If any portion of your golf ball is touching the green, it can be marked and cleaned. **(DEFINITIONS)**

10. During play of a hole, you can't rough up or scrape the surface of a green to test the speed or break of a putt. **(RULE 16-1d)**

11. You can pull strands of grass from the ground to check wind direction provided it doesn't improve your lie, line of play or area of intended stance or swing. **(DECISION 13-2/0.5)**

POP QUIZ

Q **Provided the ball's position on the green doesn't change, can you rotate your ball for alignment purposes without marking it first?**

A No. You must first mark the ball's location before rotating it to aim any logo for alignment. Penalty for violating Rule 18-2a is one stroke. To save time, you can use the toe of your putter to mark the ball's position. Beats fishing for a coin.

SHAKY GROUND

Do I have to putt over dead grass?

On the green? Maybe. Check with the course to see if you get free relief from the burnt-out area. If so, lift the ball and place it at the nearest point that provides complete relief (or the maximum available relief) so the grass is no longer on your line. That point cannot be in a hazard or closer to the hole and might be off the green. Otherwise, play it as it lies.

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New Zealand's Best Courses On Show

Fans gear up for the New Zealand Open

SEVERAL high-profile courses kicked off 2015 in style as they hosted some of New Zealand's leading golf events.

Both The Hills and Millbrook Resort, near Queenstown, are ready to host the BMW New Zealand Open from March 12-15 and the line-up of amateurs for the tournament is arguably better than the professionals. International cricket stars confirmed to tee it up include Sir Viv Richards, Brian Lara, Sir Ian Botham, Graeme Swann, Ricky Ponting, Shane Warne, Stephen Fleming, Nathan Astle and Mark Richardson.

Richards, Lara and company will compete in the pro-am teams challenge event of the tournament, in which amateur players are partnered with a professional in a two-ball best-ball team format. Ponting is one of the lowest markers, currently playing off a handicap of +1, with Astle the lowest Kiwi from that revered group, on a handicap of 4.6.

Tasman's Nelson Golf Club hosted the **31st New Zealand Men's Seniors** in February, a tournament that consistently attracts more than 150 entries from around the globe. Nelson had never before hosted a men's national open.

The first **New Zealand Speedgolf Open** will be held at the Rotorua Golf Club in late February, with Olympic 1500m silver medallist Nick Willis set to 'take off'. Willis is a big fan of the game, in which gross scores are added to completion times to derive a composite score.

Willis scored 130.20 when he competed in the first round of the 2013 World Speedgolf Championship. The tally was a combination of his 86 gross score plus the 44 minutes and 20 seconds to complete the course.

Speedgolf is fun, fast, fitness-oriented and open to all newcomers, keen athletes and casual golfers as well as traditional 18-hole members. Clearwater members and, in fact, the whole of New Zealand are bracing for the return of superstar Lydia Ko to New Zealand for the **2015 ISPS Handa NZ Women's Open** in late February.

Some doubt was cast last year on whether Ko would appear in the tournament, given her tight schedule, however, the LPGA star will head back to the tournament she won in 2013. Ko's exploits at age 17 are staggering, setting records almost every time she tees up.

Both the 2015 **Men's and Women's Stroke Play Championship** winners will be decided at the Paraparaumu Beach Links Golf course on March 26. Paraparaumu, which has has been rated among some of the world's best golf courses, has hosted the New Zealand Open a record 12 times.

Officially, it is also the only New Zealand course that former world No.1 and 14-time major champion Tiger Woods [*top right*] has played, when he competed in the 2002 New Zealand Open.

That was a memorable moment for NZ golf and fans will never forget hosting Tiger in his prime – shortly after his historic 2000/2001 season, in which he won four consecutive majors, or what fans called the 'Tiger Slam'.

◀ Australia's Dimitrios Papadatos [*left*] tees off at The Hills resort during the final round of his 2014 New Zealand Open victory.



The word is, however, that it isn't the only course Woods has played in New Zealand. Woods, along with his then caddie Steve Williams, supposedly turned up unannounced for a quiet round at South Head Golf Club, north of Auckland.

The 2002 Open will be remembered for the one in which Woods almost missed the cut. Fortunately for his fans, Woods did rally and ended up finishing strong, with veteran Aussie Craig Parry lifting the trophy.

The oldest club in Hawkes Bay, and host of the inaugural New Zealand Open in 1907, Napier Golf Club is due to host the **2015 New Zealand Women's Autumn Foursomes** from March 23-26.

Also known as Waiohiki, the club has attracted some of the top amateur women players in its 79-year history, as well as sustaining a rich social program.

Hamilton Golf Club, St Andrews also has a proud history of hosting national tournaments with six national events being played there over the past 10 years, as well as the 32nd Queen Sirikit Trophy in 2010.

Hamilton will also host the **New Zealand Women's Senior Match Play** championships in late February, which attracted entries from around New Zealand, along with national champions.

Denise Langdon is the Director of PaR nz Golfing Holiday, based in Auckland.

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The Essendon Bomber

Big-hitting Todd Sinnott is ready to take on Europe

THE fear of failure drives Todd Sinnott. It's an introspective lesson the recently-turned professional learned at the age of 17.

Was he devastated at missing out on selection in the Victorian junior golf team? "Shattered," he says. "All those junior events, the state team is what you play for and I was pretty upset back then."

But would he change that decision? "No way. It was for a reason. I learned a lot about myself – when things go wrong, I get motivated. Six guys made the team and I was seventh – the first to miss out. That drove me a lot then." It drove him to win the 2009 Victorian Boys Championship months later. It drove him to win the Dunes Medal in 2011 and it drove him to lead the field at various stages of the 2014 BetEasy Masters and Australian Open.

"Leading the Aussie Open and the Masters with so many good players in the field just showed me I was ready to mix it with the best."

And that fear still drives him. More recently, to a second-placed finish at the PGA Tour of Australasia Q-School in January, triggering his decision to join the paid ranks. The 22-year-old yearned to join those ranks for several years but with the sound advice of coach Martin Joyce and a support team around him, held off until a full-schedule of events was locked in.

Did he ever look at the prizemoney he would've made had he been more impatient? After all, he did finish in a tie for 17th at Metropolitan Golf Club and T31st at The Australian.

"Yeah, I would've made $25,000 to $35,000 from those two tournaments," he says. "It would've been nice, but it's better to be patient than go pro with nothing. I don't play for the money but if you play well, the money will come anyway."

No need to worry now though, as the Metro member has seven events lined up on Europe's secondary Challenge Tour later this year, with an eye towards the European Tour and, ultimately, the bright lights of the US PGA Tour.

Not bad for a kid from Williamstown who only picked up a golf club at the age of 12, when the Sinnott family moved in beside a driving range in Essendon.

The 194-centimetre giant has become a bomber of a different variety, but admits an AFL career with his beloved Western Bulldogs – not Essendon – was a childhood dream. "I was more of a footy player and a basketballer as a kid, but I grew too late to have a chance and I got addicted to golf," he says. "I'd get home from school and hit balls until it was dark. That driving range was a massive influence on my career."

And when a 15-year-old Sinnott approached Joyce, the Victorian Institute of Sport head coach, everything began to fall into place – save for that watershed omission from the state team. So much so that by 17 he decided a professional golf career was a possibility. A certainty, even. But with the decision to turn pro comes the need to choose a full-time caddie.

"I haven't looked too deeply into it yet. The only caddie I've really had is Marty and he taught me I need someone I can trust," Sinnott says. "All I'm thinking about now is getting a card for 2016 and hopefully working my way to the PGA Tour. After that I'm not sure, but I guess major championships are what define your career."

© NEWS CORP



Todd Sinnott waited for the "right moment" to turn pro after featuring high on the leaderboards at the 2014 Australian Open and Masters.



Undercover Tour Pro

A field guide to groupies and stalkers

I'M 29. I'm in good shape, but too skinny to be any ideal of male beauty. Back in college, at pubs, I never felt like a magnet for attention. Walking down a beach with my shirt off, the only reason females ever look twice is to marvel at the severity of my golf tan.

But when you're posting up in a new city every week, and you're a professional athlete whose big paycheques are widely reported, and you're in town for an event that involves lots of local businesses and charities and their accordant dinners and parties, several with lots of day-drinking, well . . . it's a different game.

I get my number of catcalls from the stands. Not as many as some guys, and certainly not as many as Camilo Villegas. (Who does?) And if there's a common theme, it's my pants.

"Hey, nice britches."

"Hey, I like your pants . . . No, you don't understand. I *really* like your pants."

Never mind that my wife is standing 10 metres away. Women who shout things typically aren't the kind to bother to know if a player is married. No quick Google search or even waiting until I take my glove off to reveal my shiny band. After a few $7 beers in the direct sun, a young lady is going to speak her mind.

Sometimes they jump the ropes. At one event I was paired with Rickie Fowler, and on this par 3 a woman comes running out after we hit our tee shots, cocktail in hand, and professes her love to Rickie. We chatted the whole way to the green, and then security got her.

If there are four tournaments single guys mark on their calendars, they're Dallas, Phoenix, Charlotte and Hilton Head. If you're looking for trouble, you can find it anywhere, but those four cities tend to generate the most stories. Even if you're out in jeans and a T-shirt, the women ask pretty quickly whether you're a pro golfer.

This past year at The Greenbrier Classic, I was on the practice putting green when an older woman got my attention. "Hey, you in the purple: My daughter lives in New York City. Want to see a picture?"

I won't rehash the rest, but she wanted to set me up with her daughter and had no special reason for soliciting me over any other dude. Amazing.

A lot of players on social media get creepy stalkers. A close mate had this one woman

I get my number of catcalls from the stands. Certainly not as many as Camilo Villegas.

who liked and commented on his every Instagram photo for about three years. He never had the heart to block her, but then at the Memorial he notices her in the gallery. His friends overhear her telling people that she's his girlfriend. So eventually his mates confront her and say, "That's funny. We're staying in the same house as ----- this week, and he never mentioned you."

Obviously, there's one golfer who dominated the sport while simultaneously living wild. There's no better case study that proves golf is played between our ears. If you've been out partying with a woman or women you've just met, that's going to put more bounce in the step of some guys than if they ate vegetables and slept nine hours. They're walking to the first tee thinking, *I'm invincible. I'm going to make 10 birdies*. I know plenty of guys who do everything right – work out, go back to the hotel room to watch TV and not even sip a beer and all they do is miss cuts.

Some veterans say the groupie activity used to be much more in the open. That there were players who'd just pick someone out of the gallery, and they'd leave the course together. They tell you about the guys who never would've survived the microscope of modern media. It's probably true that the threat of someone snapping an indelicate picture and posting it makes players more careful, but it's probably also a case of old-timers waxing about how life used to be better in their day.

From what I hear, the single guys are doing just fine.

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Record Rounds

Three products to get the best out of you and your golf game

EPSON M-Tracer golf swing analyser

– your own personal golf instructor.

Price: $US299.99
Epson might make printers and projectors but now they've got your golf swing sorted with the M-Tracer. The device fits directly on to your club and can give players a 3D analysis of their golf swing. A companion app can visualise that analysis and point out the areas that need improvement. It also tracks stats like clubhead speed, attack angle, clubface angle and club path and gives you the tools to make the changes and monitor your progress. It has even been endorsed by one of golf's greatest coaches David Leadbetter so you'll be slicing shots off your game in no time. **epson.com**





JVC EVERIO GZ-R10 Waterproof camcorder

– a camera for all conditions

Price: $329
It might look like a regular camcorder but the JVC GZ-R10 is actually fully waterproof and can record video at a depth of five metres for up to 30 minutes. Whether it's filming your golf swing, capturing a family day at the beach or other memories, the JVC full high definition camcorder offers the rugged durability of a GoPro, the type of zoom you can only dream about on a smartphone, a 3-inch screen to frame your shots and high video quality. An excellent family camcorder that you can take anywhere and that can handle anything you throw at it in the water, on a trail or in the snow. **jvc.net/au**

FITBIT Charge

– the all-round health, activity and sleep tracker

Price: $199
Fitbit is one of the best know companies in the growing category of activity bands and its latest product – Charge – is one of the best you can buy. The device can count your steps, distance travelled, calories burned, sleep quality and flights of stairs climbed. Users can track their progress on the device as well as take a more detailed look via the smartphone app. And because it also tells the time you can get away with using the Fitbit Charge as a watch as well. To top it all off, it can also give you a vibrating alert on your wrist when you're receiving a call so you'll never have a missed call again. **fitbit.com**

Stephen Fenech is the editor of techguide.com.au and has been a journalist and avid golfer for more than 25 years. Before creating the Tech Guide website, Fenech was the national technology writer for *The Daily Telegraph* and other News Limited newspapers around the country.



Jack-In-The-Box Performance

Polly Goldman becomes first female champ ever

HISTORY was made at the 2014 Jack Newton Celebrity Classic on two fronts – the 36th staging of Australian golf's biggest party saw its first female champion and, much to the dismay of attendees, the event ran out of beer.

Former ALPG Tour player-turned mum Polly Goldman etched her name into The Jack's record books as the first female winner of the combined tournament, after defeating pros Chris Campbell and Daniel Bringolf in a nail-biting playoff at Cypress Lakes Resort in the New South Wales Hunter Valley.

The trio finished 36 holes tied on 6-under par and headed to the 18th for the first playoff hole. But with a crowd gathered on the hill behind the 18th green, it was Goldman who triumphed after driving her ball to within 80 metres of the green and sinking a six-foot birdie putt. "The boys hit awesome shots, but I went first and pumped one up there and the crowd went wild,'' Goldman said after her win. "Waiting for them, my nerves went nuts and they hit it short. I got my next shot on the green and then holed it for a birdie."

It was a special win for Goldman, who was pregnant with each of her two children in the previous two times she played The Jack. She now only picks up the clubs for the occasional tournament but showed no signs of losing her touch, according to the tournament host.

"That was a fantastic result for the event to see a female win it," Newton says. "Polly was a very gifted amateur in my foundation and the fact she doesn't pick up the clubs often anymore, it's an extraordinary story."

The Jack is renowned for well-known Australians letting their hair down with the assistance of a beverage or two, but that became about as easy as an albatross when resort staff informed the field it had completely run out of bottled beer during the second round.

That didn't stop guests getting silly, with the usual sea of outrageous outfits such as Jordana Keating as Sailor Moon, the ABC's Craig Hamilton in 70s fashion and pro Nikki Garrett as the boardgame Twister.

While the absent Bob Hawke was unable to lead his famous rendition of Waltzing Matilda, there were plenty of hilarious moments – the winners of The Jack awards followed actor Gary Sweet's tradition and jumped in the pool, while guests were entertained by stellar musicians such as Clint Hydman from Something For Kate, Spiderbait lead singer Kram and former Powderfinger guitarist Darren Middleton. When house band Rubber Bullet took the stage, actors Ben Mingay (Wonderland) and Jack Campbell, former NRL player Tim Brasher and seasoned Queensland musician Barry Charles grabbed the microphone and blew the crowd away. At least enough to get Newton showing his moves on the dance floor.

"It was probably the best show I've seen at The Jack in 36 years of the tournament," Newton says.

Above all, two worthy causes benefitted from the generosity of all those involved – the Jack Newton Junior Golf Foundation and diabetes. "The foundation and diabetes are two things close to my heart and close to many Australians. We've raised more than $5 million for both, so I thank everyone for their ongoing support," says Newton.

IMAGES SUPPLIED









▸ The Block star Brad Cranfield tees off in a traditional German lederhosen [*left*]; ABC radio host Craig Hamilton goes back in time [*above left*]; Jordana Keating dons a Sailor Moon outfit [*above right*]; Nikki Garrett does her best boardgame impression [*middle*]; and Polly Goldman celebrates her historic win [*right]*.

Opposite page: Actors Gyton Grantley [*left*] and Rhys Muldoon join Spiderbait lead singer Kram at The Jack afterparty.

Many elite athletes are now donning masks or working out in oxygen-deprivation rooms.

Sucking Wind

Does restricting air flow give golfers like Rory an edge?

ON PAPER it seemed like a fair fight: Rory versus Rickie. McIlroy came into this past September's Ryder Cup as the No.1 golfer in the world, and Fowler was enjoying the best year of his career, having finished no worse than T-5 in all four majors. But by the sixth hole of their singles match, it was over. McIlroy was 5 up and showed no signs of fatigue from having played 70 holes of pressure-packed golf during the previous two days.

Why did Rory look and play so invigorated? One doctor believes it's because of the way he trains in the gym. McIlroy often runs on a treadmill wearing a high-altitude-simulation training mask. Known as hypoxia or altitude training, it restricts the flow of air while McIlroy is running sprints and doing other cardiovascular exercise. The goal is to improve endurance by training the body to require less oxygen for muscles to function optimally for longer periods in a sea-level atmosphere. Working with trainer Steve McGregor, McIlroy alternates between 90-second sprints and walking to vary his heart rate, says Dr Ara Suppiah, a sports-medicine expert whose patients include US PGA Tour stars Justin Rose, Ian Poulter, Steve Stricker, Henrik Stenson and Hunter Mahan.

"It's a legal performance-enhancer," Suppiah says. "It increases endurance because the oxygen-extracting capacity in the muscles goes up. You don't produce lactic acid as much in those muscles, and when you do, that burning feeling dissipates much quicker."

There has yet to be a definitive scientific answer on whether this type of training works. In 2010, the National Centre for Biotechnolgy Information published a report that stated "hypoxia as a supplement to training is not consistently found to be advantageous for performance at sea level." However, many elite athletes are now donning masks or working out in oxygen-deprivation rooms in the hopes of gaining an edge.

"You should not try hypoxia training if you have pre-existing conditions such as high blood pressure, heart disease, poor circulation, diabetes, etc," Suppiah says. "Everyone should be vetted by a doc first."

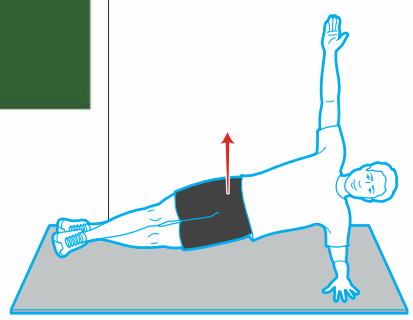
Regardless of whether you wear the mask, the type of interval training McIlroy does on the treadmill is great for golfers because it improves function of the fast-twitch muscle fibers needed to swing a golf club powerfully.

"Golf is a sport where you need explosive power for a second or two every few minutes, and then you rest," Suppiah says. "This type of training mimics those needs."



YOUR NEW CORE EXERCISE

Hopefully by now you've given up sit-ups and crunches as your go-to core exercises (they put too much strain on the spine). And if you're finding that standard face-down planks aren't challenging enough, try the side plank. New research says the exercise known as a side plank or bridge will trigger some of the highest muscle activity in the oblique and deep abdominal muscles when compared to other plank exercises. When you do side planks, make sure the forearm you're resting on is directly under your shoulder, Simpson says. Also keep your legs and spine as straight as possible. Try to hold the position for as long as you can, then switch sides and repeat for the same time.



Water Hazard?

Ever wonder how safe and clean the water is in a golf-course cooler? So do we. Instead of taking a chance with each sip from a paper cup, collect the water in a new ZeroWater travel bottle (zerowater.com). Its manufacturer says the built-in filtration system removes all solid particles from the water. All you have to do is change the filter (it changes colour when it's time for a replacement). There are many water filtration systems on the market, but we like this bottle because it's easy to store in a golf cart or bag.

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Caption this!

How would you caption this photo of Rory McIlroy and Rickie Fowler looking lost at the Abu Dhabi HSBC Golf Championship? Send your entry to golfdig@newslifemedia.com.au and we'll publish the best one in our next issue. Get thinking!



GETTY IMAGES

NEED A NEW FAIRWAY WOOD?



This issue's caption winner will win a Cobra Bio Cell fairway wood worth $229, courtesy of our friends at Cobra-PUMA Golf.

"Hey kids! At last, a good lie!"

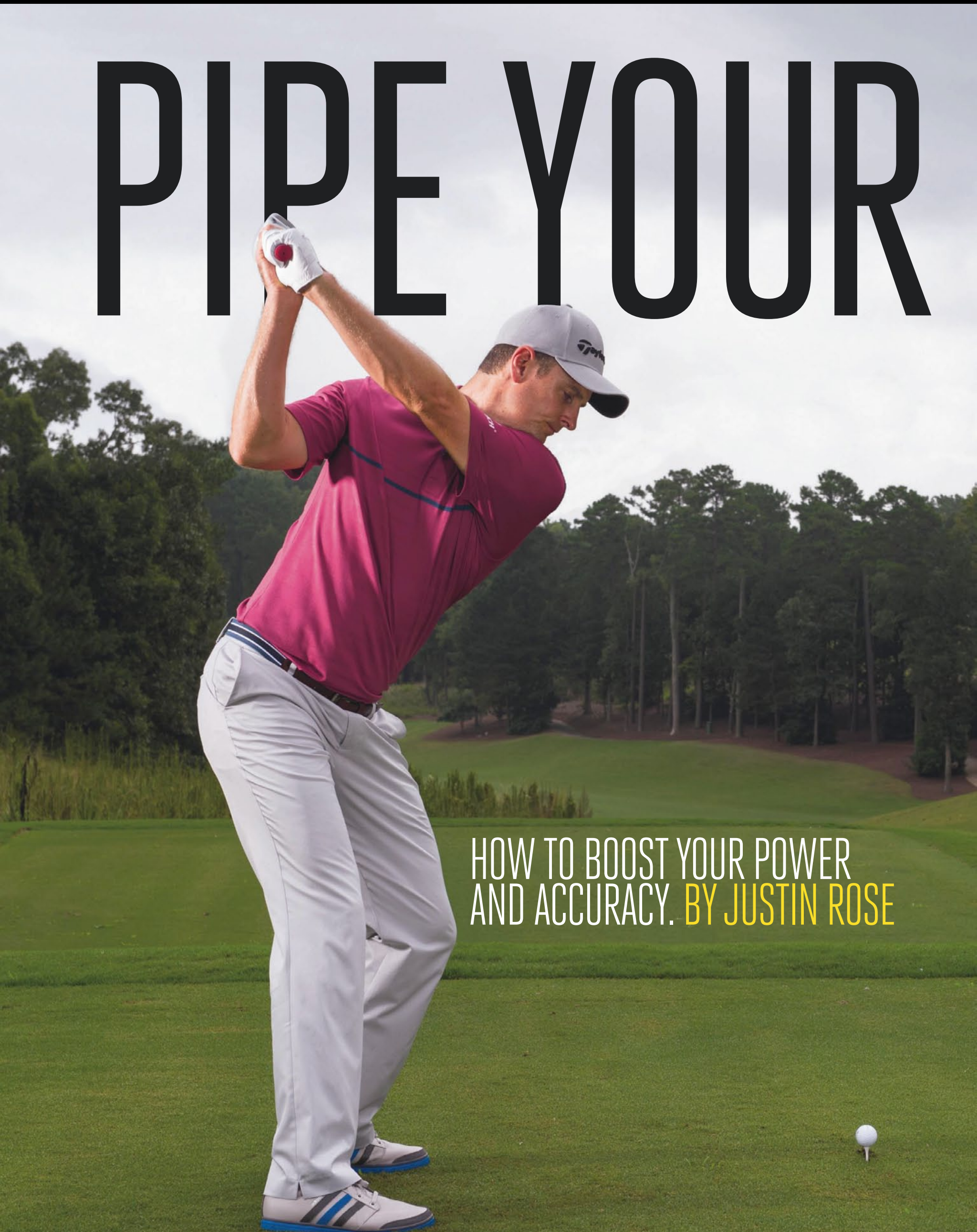
Congratulations to our February issue winner Micheal Meade on this funny take on Jose Maria Olazabal taking a seat with excited fans. Your new Cobra Bio Cell fairway is on its way!

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PIPE YOUR



HOW TO BOOST YOUR POWER AND ACCURACY. BY JUSTIN ROSE

DRIVER



▸ I FINISHED 2014 ranked fourth in a new stat called 'Strokes Gained: Tee to Green'. It measures performance versus the field in everything but putting. For tour players, that really means driving and approach shots. Here's what I think about when I'm driving the ball well and hitting greens.

OFF THE TEE

▸ The most important part of my driver swing is generating power from the connection between my feet and the ground. It starts with a good setup. I play the ball up in my stance, because you need to catch it on the upswing with the driver if you want distance. I get into a good, athletic posture, and from there I start my swing.

The one-piece takeaway is a thing of the past. I think of it in pieces: the clubhead goes first, then the hands, then the arms. I turn into my right side, loading my right hip and engaging my glutes [*left*], similar to doing squats or deadlifts. That feeling of loading my right leg is a huge key for me.

Throughout the backswing, I'm thinking of the word *develop*. I'm not rushing to the top. I'm letting the swing develop in its own time. That helps me sync everything. At the top, when all my weight is loaded into my right side, I feel like my right big toe is pressing into the ground. I'm building as much leverage as possible from the ground up.

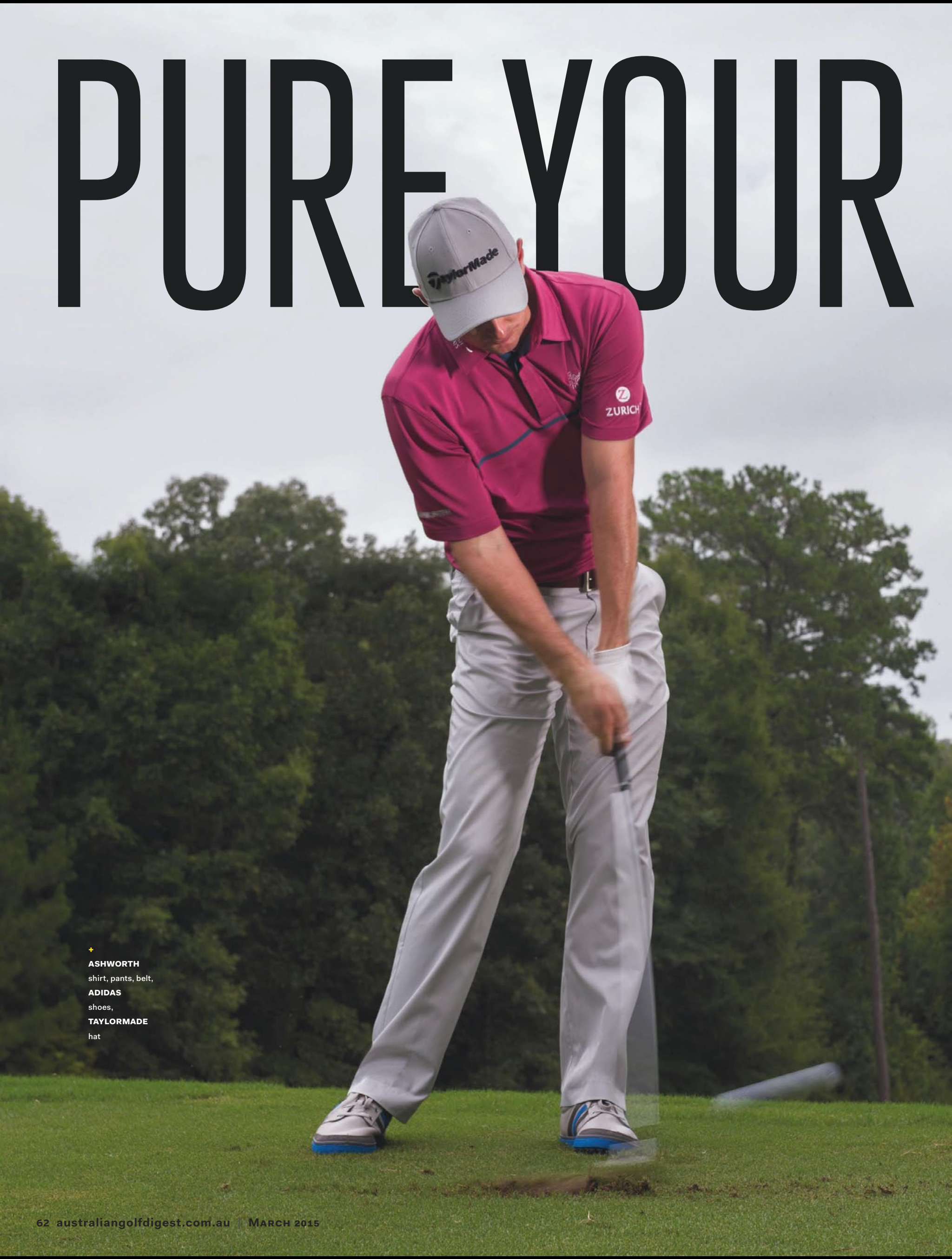
That sets up my move back to the ball. The key moment of my downswing is when I'm halfway down. There, I'm focused on storing power and maintaining my height. I keep up the pressure into the ground through my feet. With all that leverage, I can push off and release the club powerfully into the ball. If I've stayed in the shot and kept my connection to the ground, I'm ripping it down the middle.

DRIVER PRACTICE

Here's a drill I use for building power out of the ground. I drop my left foot back and put 90 per cent of my weight on my right foot. Then I bring my arms to the top and practise swinging halfway down. My weight doesn't move off my right side, so my right leg is constantly engaged [*right*]. Repeating this motion helps me feel explosive into the ball, just what I want with the driver.

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PURE YOUR



+
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shoes,
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hat

IRONS

▸ ONCE the ball is in the fairway, it's time to put a good swing on my approach shot to get a look at birdie. Although the basic mechanics of the iron swing are similar to the driver, there are some differences. Namely, you want to hit down instead of hitting up. Here's what I do on my iron shots:

TO THE GREEN

▸ My ball position with the irons is farther back than with my driver, but it's still forward of centre. Moving the ball back like this naturally puts more weight on my front foot, so I'm more over the ball. That's a classic iron position.

In the takeaway, I think about having good width, but my arms don't travel as far as they do in a driver swing. I like to feel a nice, tight windup to the top, or a full body turn but with a shorter arm swing. Another key is to stay more centred, without much lateral movement. This makes it easier to keep all the parts in sync.

As with the driver, a good key is to feel your weight load into your right leg. But make sure the pressure stays on the *instep* of your right foot. If you shift to the outside, you move off the ball, and that makes it tough to get back at impact.

When I swing down, I feel as if I'm leading the clubhead with my hands until just before impact. I know I've hit it well when my left arm feels real solid at the low point of the swing. (The low point is just past impact, at the end of the divot.) In the photo at far left, you can see how my left arm and the club are in line as the ball launches off the face.

IRON PRACTICE

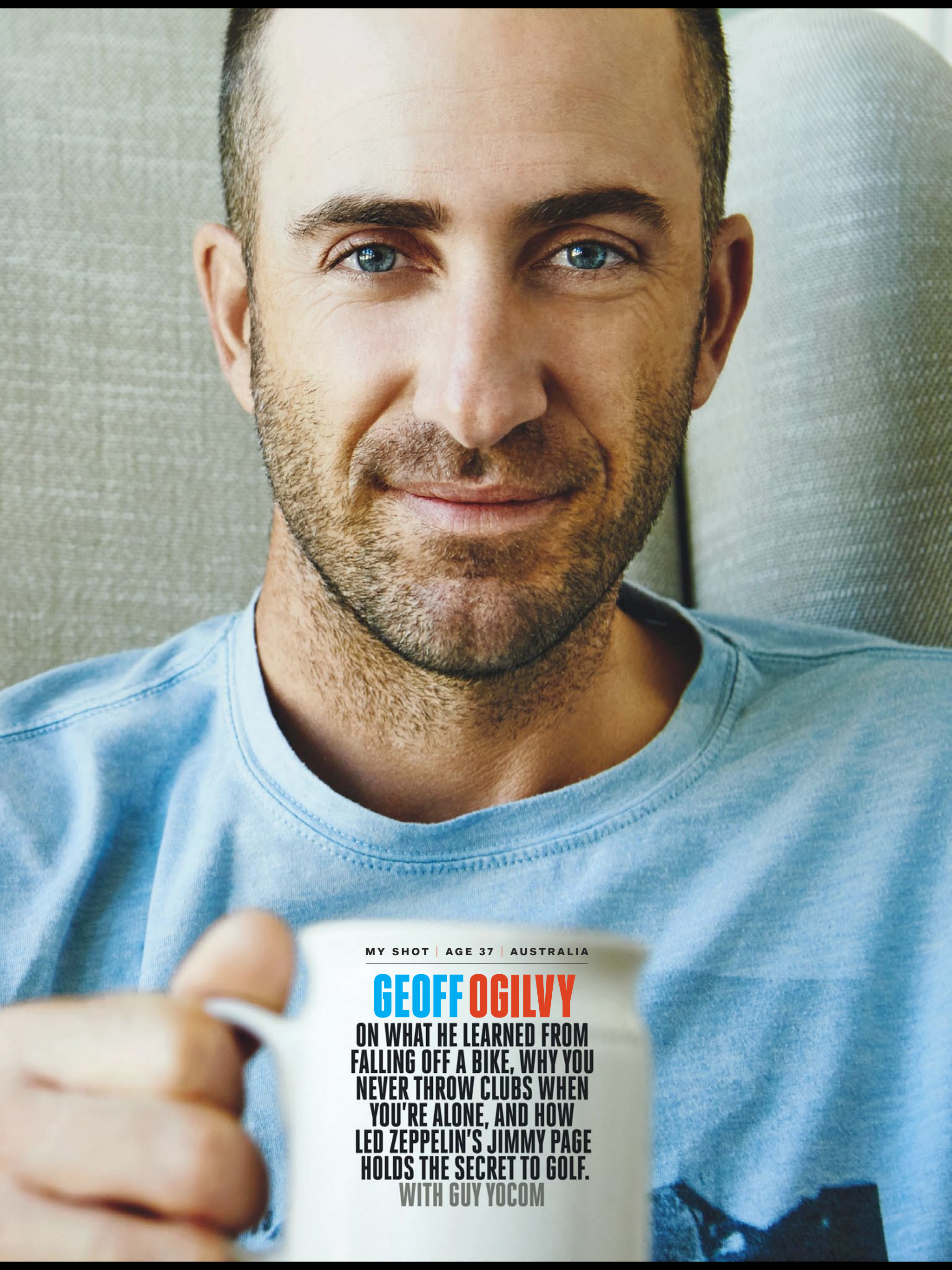
The position of the clubface at impact dictates where the ball starts, and it begins with the setup. I try to go with clear targets - If there's a distinctive tree 2 metres left of the flag, that's the exact direction in which I'm aiming.

To aim, I draw an imaginary line from my target to the ball [*left*]. Then I choose an intermediate target on that line 2m in front of me. I square the club to the shorter target, then take my stance. Practise that at the range, and make it part of your routine.

—WITH KEELY LEVINS

THE THINKER





MY SHOT | AGE 37 | AUSTRALIA

GEOFF OGILVY

ON WHAT HE LEARNED FROM FALLING OFF A BIKE, WHY YOU NEVER THROW CLUBS WHEN YOU'RE ALONE, AND HOW LED ZEPPELIN'S JIMMY PAGE HOLDS THE SECRET TO GOLF.

WITH GUY YOCOM

I'VE ALWAYS THOUGHT tall, dense grass is the least attractive hazard in golf. Slowly we seem to be moving towards shorter, lighter rough, even at the US Open, which more than any championship was defined by punishing setups that permitted little in the way of recoveries. Was the setup at Pinehurst for the US Open not wonderful? Did not the best player that week (Martin Kaymer) win? To those who cling to deep rough, I'd ask this: If Bubba Watson were in tall, dense grass to the right of the 10th hole at the 2012 Masters and had to pitch out, would that have been a good thing? Wasn't the attempt at a bold recovery great to see? Would you have rather watched Phil Mickelson reflexively lay up on the 13th hole in 2010 instead of having a go from the pine straw? Case closed.

IT'S OBVIOUS that narrow driving zones, extreme length and dense grass don't suit me. I dislike them. So how did I win the 2006 US Open at Winged Foot on one of the most penal setups in golf? Well, nobody hit a lot of fairways. On a course that is supposed to reward pure ball-striking and tremendous driving accuracy, the opposite happened, more or less. I wound up lumped in with everyone else. The penal setups are how Phil Mickelson, far from a precision player, has finished runner-up six times. In 2006, it came down to who was best from 90 metres and in. For that week, it was me.

SOMEONE ASKED the great Led Zeppelin guitarist Jimmy Page what he sought to do with his music. He answered that he wanted "light and shade," a blend of sounds and approaches. That's basically my view of course design. Contrast. A well-paced variety of short and long holes, easy ones and hard ones, tension and happiness. Different looks, surprises and always, harmony. The worst thing is redundancy, especially when it leans towards being too difficult.

I PLAY GUITAR, by the way. I'm about a 12-handicapper, so not very good. But every now and then, I hit these strides that are similar to getting in the zone in golf. I'll play something that passes for listenable, and I think, *Hey, that was pretty good!* And then the fantasy kicks in. I imagine myself sitting in a room with Jimmy Page, the two of us noodling around on our 1959 Gibson Les Pauls, improvising and sharing riffs on an equal level. These little fantasies are why millions of people play air-guitar in private.



THE MOST POWERFUL WORD in golf might well be "par." Can you imagine what would happen to the Masters if the par-5 13th hole at Augusta National was downgraded to a par 4 on the scorecard? The psychological effect of "par" (an arbitrary number, when you think about it) is enormous. And negative. Fewer players would go for the green in two; they'd lay up for fear of making double-bogey. And then they'd complain. Fans, the less-knowledgeable ones especially, would hate that eagles were impossible and birdies rare. Mind you, the winning 72-hole score would still be the same. The 13th's stroke average of 4.79 since 1934 wouldn't change much. It's just a number on the card. But people would hate it.

THERE ARE FEATURES on old courses that are considered iconic and wonderful, which would never be imitated today. The bunker in the centre of the green on the sixth at Riviera. The deep little pot bunker at the 10th at Pine Valley. These would be considered madness today, and I guess for good reason, as they'd seem contrived. There are actually entire holes that would not be attempted, including the par-5 15th at Augusta. The second shot there is insanely hard if you go for the green. If you lay up, it's just too severe, even with a wedge. Because of where it is and its place in history, it's considered wonderful. But if you plopped that hole in any other setting, players would scream.

FROM THE BEGINNER to Rory McIlroy, everyone loves super-short par 3s. Everyone loves the 97-metre seventh hole at Pebble Beach, or the par-3 Postage Stamp at Troon in Scotland. They're considered genius architecture. The question is, why aren't there more of them?

THE BEST SPOTS in golf for me, hands down, are the 12th green and 13th tee at Augusta National during the Masters. The reason is that very few humans get to go there. It's not a snob thing, it's an accomplishment thing. When I stand on the 12th green, the realisation sinks in that I'm at a place few people have been, or will ever get to their whole lives. A cool phenomenon happens there. When a putt falls in the hole, there's a delay before you hear the applause, because the gallery's 150m away.

SPEAKING OF GOLF SNOBS, I've identified four sub-species so far. The first is The Membership Collector. He belongs to several clubs, all of them expensive, exclusive and always on the tip of his tongue. The second is Mr Traditionalist. He raves about 5,500m seaside courses (preferably in Scotland), plays them with wooden woods and insists golf was better before they invented the bunker rake. Then there's Mr Big and New. He buys a new driver every six months, has 40 Scotty Cameron putters, drives brand-new cars to courses that are 7,000m. Loves huge clubhouses with wine cellars. Then there's The History Guy. That's me. Always talking about old players, old courses, the history of majors and so on. Knows not only about architects, but when and where they were born.

WHEN MY 4-YEAR-OLD SON, Harvey, decides he doesn't want to eat his dinner, that's that. His stubbornness is such that we could sit him there for two days, and he won't eat it. My wife, Juli, and I think he gets that stubbornness from me. When I was 5, I decided to learn to ride a bike. It did not go well. All day I kept falling, blood and scrapes everywhere. Early the next morning I went back out, and by noon, I had it down. That stubbornness, combined with a bit of narcissism, really paid

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off when I took up golf. Golf is nothing if not frustrating, and the only way to fight through it is with stubbornness. Is Jack Nicklaus not stubborn above all else?

STUBBORNNESS and determination really come into play on the three-foot putt for par. But when you face 50 of them a week in competition for six straight weeks, they begin to erode you. Over the course of a 30-year career, they beat you up. I don't take them lightly, even when I'm practising, because I don't want to form bad habits. So I grind over every one of them. I yearn for the day when I retire and play friendly games with my mates, and when I don't like the look of a certain three-footer, just raking it away and walking to the next tee. That is true freedom.

SEVE BALLESTEROS, more than any other player, looked "right" over the ball. On short shots especially, there was something about him as he settled in and waggled that immediately conveyed perfection to the human eye. It's strange, because if you examined Seve for too long, all kinds of unconventional things would emerge, and the perfection would go away. But that first glance of a golfer is the most accurate, the one you should trust. It's rather like looking at a picture frame and knowing instantly if it's a millimetre off centre. Tiger Woods in 2002 had that "right" look, especially with the longer clubs. One player today has it, at least to my eye: Louis Oosthuizen.

IF YOU WANT TO SEE a lot of players who look "right" over the ball, come over to Whisper Rock in Scottsdale, Arizona. I'm a member there, and on any given day of the week there are so many good players hanging around, it's a joke. I don't just mean the 30 or so tour players. I'm talking amateurs – guys with regular jobs who I will not give strokes to. The club championship is 36 holes of strokeplay, and I've never won it. The year I came closest, I got beat by an amateur named Jim Strickland. Turned out, Stricky had gone to Arizona State University with Phil Mickelson. There are a lot of guys like Jim out there.

I JUST THOUGHT of another type of golf snob. It's The Harder Is Better guy. The club member who comes up to me at a tour event and says, "Bet you guys thought it would be easy, eh? Nice to see it beat you up the way it beats us up." Oakmont members are like that. The faster, more impossible they can get the greens, the better they like it. Nice people, but I don't understand the mindset.

GOLF WRITING on the whole isn't as enjoyable as it once was. I love reading Bobby Jones' books, and it's a shame there's nothing like them being put out today. There are few masters of the craft left. Literary geniuses like Tom Callahan are disappearing because there are fewer platforms for them. Golf books, save for instruction titles, don't sell well, so writers are less motivated to develop that literary ability. It's all very fast. And let's face it, there are fewer golf legends to write about. The Internet has made it impossible for a mysterious person like Ben Hogan to exist.

EARLY IN THE WEEK of the 2013 British Open at Muirfield, a few tour players who were in the know drove up the road and played North Berwick. Word got around, and by the end of the week, 30 guys had played there. By consensus, it was the most fun they had ever had playing golf. The quirkiness of the design is spectacular – the original Redan hole is there, one green is flush against a stone wall, and the green on another hole is 64m long. The greatest feature is the nine-hole children's course, which adults cannot play unless accompanied by a kid. When you see that children's course, you realise the secret to growing golf has been sitting under our noses since 1888, when that course was built.

TWO MORE EXAMPLES of what golf needs more of: the pitch-and-putt course at Turnberry in Scotland and the par-3 Horse Course at the Prairie Club in Nebraska. The pitch-and-putt requires a wedge and putter, it's free, and you can play it in jeans and a T-shirt. At The Horse Course, you tee up anywhere and the winner picks which green you play to, like H-O-R-S-E in basketball. The courses are free adjuncts to the regular golf and are almost always very busy because people love them so much. They're magnets for interest. If every new course devoted five acres to short courses, far more people would be attracted to golf.

'THE SECRET TO GROWING GOLF HAS BEEN SITTING UNDER OUR NOSES SINCE 1888.'

THE SHORT SHOT from a tight lie – the type I played from in front of Winged Foot's 18th in 2006 – is causing all kinds of havoc. There are more cases of pitching yips, brought on by that very type of shot, than ever before. There's a very good player on tour, whom I don't care to identify, who has as bad a case of the pitching yips as I've ever seen. He's in a very dark place mentally and has become a master of disguising this weakness. He'll hit his ball to some extraordinarily difficult places to avoid hitting the 30m pitch from a tight lie. He's making a very good living, but sooner or later he'll face a 30m shot over a bunker on national TV when it really counts. He'll lay the sod over it three times in a row. And then you'll know who I'm talking about.

ALMOST EVERY TOUR PLAYER has a certain amount of "hang on" in their swing. I'm talking about a little bit of restraint in their release through impact, to prevent the ball from curving too much one way or the other. There are only two exceptions: Rory McIlroy and Angel Caberera. Rory holds absolutely nothing back, and his natural draw is a wonder. Angel, when he's on song, hits the most beautiful fade I've ever seen.

TEMPER TANTRUMS in golf are a strange thing. People only beat their 4-iron on their bag when people are around. Throwing a club is a way of saying, "I'm too good to have hit such a terrible shot". They're embarrassed and prideful. The truth, of course, is they're not that good. That's why we in turn feel embarrassed for them.

SERGIO GARCIA has gone from being merely a superb ball-striker to being the best in the game. Sergio has always been a "flusher". But today he plays golf utterly the way it was meant to be played – drawing or fading the ball at will, probably the way Hogan did it. The strange thing is, his putting evolved at inverse proportion to his ball-striking. At age 17, Sergio was the best putter I'd ever seen. From 15 feet he was practically automatic. But as his ball-striking got better, his putting got worse.

PETER FOWLER, an outstanding Australian golfer who now plays the European Senior Tour, phoned the great Peter Thomson for advice in the early 1980s. Fowler was struggling to break through, and he asked the five-time British Open champion if he had any insight on what to do to get better. With barely a pause, Thomson said, "Shoot lower scores," and hung up. Fowler was crestfallen at first, but then he started to see the genius in the great Thomson's words. It was as if Thomson were saying, "There's a ball and a hole. Stop getting in your own way. Stop making it so hard. Get on with it. Just do better."

PICTURE A RYDER CUP at Augusta National. The way the back nine would provoke heroics and collapses when it mattered most? It's impossible, of course. The timing of the event, the condition of the course in autumn, the fact the club would never consent. But we can dream, can't we?

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THE BIOMECHANIST



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COACHING SPECIAL

Sports scientist Ryan Lumsden has upset more than a few PGA professionals. But he is changing the way elite golfers are being coached in the 21st Century.

BY **ROHAN CLARKE**

▲ Ryan Lumsden performs a biomechanical analysis on Victorian professional Alison Whitaker at Spring Valley Golf Club in Melbourne.

KYLIE THOMSON • OPPOSITE: GETTY IMAGES



▲ Tiger Woods has employed Chris Como as his swing consultant. Como is studying biomechanics at Texas Woman's University under Korean professor Young-Hoo Kwon. They have worked together using 3D motion analysis to teach golf swing mechanics from a biomechanical perspective.

HE HAS a degree in cynicism and a Scotsman's dry wit. But Ryan Lumsden might just be the most knowledgeable person in Australia when it comes to understanding the golf swing.

Lumsden is this country's foremost biomechanical analyst. As such, he works closely with each of the state instructors that form Golf Australia's national coaching network, examining the swings of elite amateurs around the country.

On the international stage, Lumsden has been an indispensible muse of Pete Cowen, the Yorkshireman who has transformed the games of Europe's top professionals. Henrik Stenson rose to world No.2 on the back of Cowen's all-encompassing approach to coaching where biomechanics plays an integral role.

Ritchie Smith – the Western Australian coach of Oliver Goss and Minjee Lee – is another devotee. The 2014 PGA Teacher of the Year pays Lumsden the ultimate compliment by saying: "Technically, I think he is the best coach in the country.

"He understands the body better than anyone. He knows more about technique than almost anyone else. So I'm very happy to take advice from Ryan. If I say something and Ryan says something, I'll pretty much go with what Ryan says almost every time."

It's no coincidence those states that have embraced Lumsden's biomechanical assessments are starting to get results. Despite a relatively small selection base in Western Australia, Smith guided the women's amateur team to the Interstate title in three of the past four years. The Victorian system has a conveyer belt of talent and contributed half of the 10 Australian competitors at last year's Asia-Pacific Amateur Championship. And, South Australia produced two of the best performances last summer: Antonio Murdaca captured the Asia-Pacific title while injury-prone drifter Nick Cullen made a long overdue statement with his Australian Masters success.

Biomechanics has been in the news recently following Tiger Woods' decision to hire Chris Como as his swing coach. Como is studying for a Masters at Texas Woman's University under the tutelage of Korean academic Young-Hoo Kwon, the director of the Biomechanics Laboratory.

It's an encouraging development according to Lumsden (who gave a presentation to a conference session chaired by Dr Kwon for the International Society of Biomechanics in Sports in 2012). But Lumsden laments that many Australian coaches have been slow to embrace biomechanical analysis and improve their knowledge in this area.

The 35-year-old is partly to blame as he shies away from the limelight, choosing to work in relative obscurity on the developmental side of the game in Australia. His credentials, however, are at least the equal of his Korean counterpart.

Born in Dundee, Lumsden grew up in St Andrews where he was a scratch marker and Scottish junior representative. He studied Sport and Exercise Science at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow, graduating with honours in Biomechanics in 2001. The syllabus covered all aspects of sports science, such as exercise



▲ Nick Faldo was a keen student at the 2004 Heineken Classic. Lumsden and the late Ramsay McMaster put the six-time major winner through a biomechanical analysis on the range at Royal Melbourne.

physiology, sports psychology, sports nutrition, strength and conditioning and skill learning.

In the final year of his degree (having never been on a plane before), Lumsden came to Australia, which coincided with the 2000 Sydney Olympics. He had been in touch with the late Ross Herbert and arranged to do some work experience at the Australian Institute of Sport golf program in Melbourne.

The stint had a profound influence on Lumsden, who got to see the pioneering approach of the AIS, which had begun to train golfers like Olympians through the introduction of physiotherapy, sports psychology and strength and conditioning training.

Lumsden returned to Australia at the start of 2003 and has remained ever since. When he's not on the road, he works as a private contractor at the Victorian Institute of Sport's facility at Spring Valley Golf Club and at Golf Australia's head office in Melbourne's CBD.

BEHIND THE SCIENCE

LUMSDEN calls himself a sports scientist, which conjures up the name of Stephen Dank, the man synonymous with the notorious supplements program at the Essendon Football Club in 2012. Hence, the title of sports scientist has been a source of amusement for Lumsden upon being greeted by customs officials after writing it as his occupation on passenger cards when departing/entering the country.

But the scope of a sports scientist encompasses many facets, not just biomechanics, which Lumsden regards as a branch of the overall discipline into how the body functions during movement. The psychology of sports science, for instance, is useful in knowing how to deliver information and help golfers with changes to swing mechanics. It's about making them understand why they are doing golf-specific exercises to improve their bodies, which assist with making such swing changes.

With regard to elite golfers, Lumsden analyses the movement and body functions within their full swing. He wants to establish the most effective way for an individual to swing the golf club.

"You're trying to see what they're physically capable of doing and get them using the correct muscles to support the movement, so they're generating clubhead speed in the most effective way. You're trying to develop efficient technique while minimising the stress on the body as well as giving them the ability to play all the shots required, controlling distance, shape and trajectory."

That last point explains why the injury-prone Woods has sought out a coach, such as Como, with an appreciation of biomechanics. And it's also for that reason why the best young amateurs in Australia are required to visit Lumsden for a biomechanical analysis.

Using an electromagnetic tracking system, Lumsden places sensors on a golfer's body to gather information about position and orientation throughout the swing. That is reconstructed through maths and computer software to process all the displacements and angles. Lumsden translates that data into which body segments are moving where and how they're sequencing during the swing.

"Some things are very intricate in the golf swing and you just can't see them with your naked eye," says Ritchie Smith. "We've got a hunch, but you need data to back it up. And that's where he comes into it."

The aim is to create the right 'angles' in the swing. If a golfer can maintain these angles better, then rotational ability becomes more stable. And because of that stability, a golfer's able to swing the club harder.

In theory, that translates into longer drives and shorter approach shots into the greens to set up more birdie opportunities – a prerequisite to compete in today's power game. A lack of body angle changes also leads to straighter drives says Smith. "If you're maintaining a tighter, more wound and more efficient structure, then surely your delivery is going to be better because of it."

Some would argue this turns golf more into a science than a game. And there could be a suggestion Lumsden's work makes golfers a little bit robotic due to the nature of swinging within certain physical parameters. But that's not entirely correct because he will take into consideration what a golfer's body is capable of doing. And he will consider an individual's preferences for technique and accommodate these before recommending any swing changes.

"I'm matching that up with what they're trying to achieve with their swing and what concepts they have," says Lumsden "because it's no use to me if I get a player coming in and they say they're trying to keep the clubface shut going back. But by keeping the clubface closed going back, they're actually causing their body to tilt and affecting their pivot and therefore affecting how they get pressure into the ground and so on."

OVERCOMING LANGUAGE BARRIERS

IT'S EASY to see why Lumsden can intimidate some people. He speaks in terminology that – unless you're really switched on – it's hard to keep up with. Plus, he produces data that is interpretable only to those who understand the data and have used it for a while.

Some PGA professionals

> "Technically, I think he's the best coach in the country. He understands the body better than anyone."
> – WA state coach Ritchie Smith



English teaching pro Pete Cowen is glowing in his praise of Lumsden. In a testimonial, he said: "You know how much I appreciate your knowledge and insight and input into helping me understand biomechanics. You would always be my first, and probably only, port of call on this subject because you understand where I am coming from with my preferences."

take offence when someone they perceive as less qualified begins to critique their teaching methods. "If you're working in a way that the body can't work, he will tell you. And that's where Ryan gets a little bit offside with some coaches," says Smith.

According to Lumsden, things that stand out to coaches are usually how the body is positioned at impact and how the club is released through impact. They're often the things they focus on and try to change. But Lumsden says those things that occur through impact are usually compensations that make a player's swing work. Hence, trying to tell a coach how to suck eggs doesn't go down too well and frequently leads to conflict.

"I cop it a fair bit because people don't really understand what I'm doing," Lumsden concedes.

"By identifying causes, I'm often looking at different things to what the coaches are, and placing importance on different things to affect outcomes. It can often take a bit of discussion to get on the same page.

"Because I'm talking golf swings and technique, it's very close to what the coaches do. They don't understand I've got that degree providing underlying knowledge about functional anatomy and how the body's working, together with the background of quantifying thousands of swings of players at all levels.

"Often they think that biomechanics is about testing a player and telling them how they should be swinging it. But that's not how I work. So a lot of the time, the coaches think it's my opinion. It's not my opinion, it's actually black and white in evidence there in front of you. I'm confident of my interpretation of how certain things interrelate within the golf swing based on this evidence."

Perhaps, it will be Woods' relationship with Como and Kwon that changes people's understanding of biomechanical analysis. Sceptics and agnostics would certainly have to reconsider their views if Woods can reconfigure his swing for a fourth time and dominate on the US PGA Tour like only he can do. And that would be a good thing for those, like Lumsden, trying to promote the usefulness of sports science in golf.

To the agnostics, Lumsden says: "I know how I can influence aspects of the swing. And I know how quickly we can do it if we're focussing on the right thing. But more often than not, they want to focus on the wrong things . . . Unfortunately, a lot of these coaches won't come and have a conversation to go through what you think, what you know. I'm happy to justify what I say and put evidence behind it."

Footnote: For further information about Ryan Lumsden and the biomechanical analysis and sports science consultancy services he provides through his company, **Q Golf**, visit **qgolf.com.au**

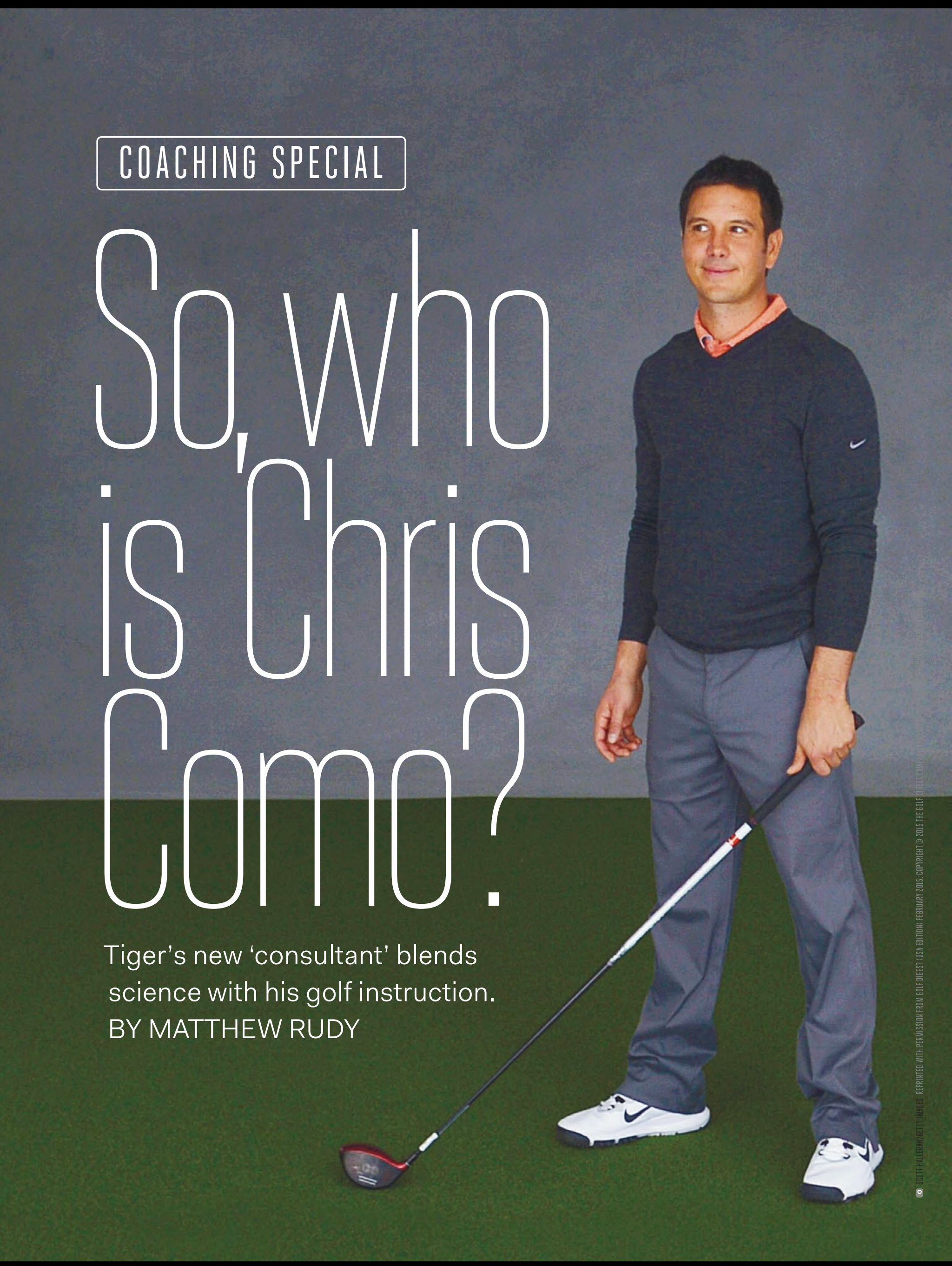
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COACHING SPECIAL

So, who is Chris Como?

Tiger's new 'consultant' blends science with his golf instruction.

BY MATTHEW RUDY



SCOTT HALLERAN/GETTY IMAGES

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IF a bookmaker was pricing odds for the list of potential replacements for Sean Foley as Tiger Woods' swing coach when their split was announced in August, Chris Como would have been a roughie, to say the least.

The Texas-based instructor is well known inside the wonky world of golf biomechanics, but casual observers probably wouldn't recognise him if he were giving a lesson on the next mat at the driving range.

That all changed in November when Woods tweeted that he was pleased to have Como consulting on his swing. Suddenly, Como went from being a relatively anonymous member of Golf Digest's Best Young Teachers list – whose students included Trevor Immelman, Aussie Aaron Baddeley and Jamie Lovemark – to one of the most talked-about gurus in golf.

That Woods didn't pick a more veteran teacher like Chuck Cook or Claude Harmon III might have surprised some, but Como, 37, has a set of skills that makes him right for the job – at least for now.

For four years Como taught a full schedule at Gleneagles Country Club in Plano, Texas, and on tour while taking classes toward a master's degree in biomechanics at Texas Woman's University. At TWU, Como studied under Dr Young-Hoo Kwon, considered one of the foremost experts in golf biomechanics and how athletic motion can lead to injuries.

Kwon and Como published two papers for Sports Biomechanics, a scholarly journal, and are working on new projects.

"Chris has worked really hard ever since I met him," Kwon says. "And he's going to play a unique role in connecting the worlds of golf training and science in the coming years."

None of that knowledge would have mattered if Como didn't have the ability to convert tech-speak to tour-speak, and if he didn't have a foot in the door of Woods' tightly-insulated world.

Enter Notah Begay III.

The player-turned broadcaster is a longtime friend of Woods and a former teammate at Stanford University. Begay knows Como well from the time they spent together in the Dallas area and thought he could offer the right combination of expertise, inquisitiveness and low-key calm that Woods wanted from a swing advisor. Begay set up a meeting, and it clicked. Como got to work in October when Woods started hitting full shots again after his latest back injury.

"I had this plan in my head of what I wanted my swing to look like, and what I wanted to get out of my body," Woods says. "I wanted to align myself with somebody who feels the same way. Chris's view of what my swing should be fits my view of where I should be going."

Woods added that he was impressed with Como's eagerness to learn. "To him, it's not acceptable to not have an answer," Woods says. "He always wants to find that answer to why something is doing what. One of the reasons he researches as much as he does is to know why."

Determining the whats and whys in Woods' swing, which so far seems to centre on reincorporating a looser, freer circa-2000 action, is probably the easiest part of Como's job description. The bigger challenges will be getting the notoriously fickle Woods to completely buy into the program and managing the megawatt media attention.

Hank Haney knows that world from the inside and the sideline. He started working with Woods in 2004 and was happy to give Foley a turn in the skillet after the 2010 Masters. He believes Woods' initial description of Como's role as a "consultant" was intentional, to take pressure off the teacher.

"He's giving himself room so that if Chris isn't at a tournament, he doesn't have to explain himself every time, and the media won't start saying Chris is going to get fired," Haney says. "The other part is that Tiger wants to have ownership of what's going on. When you have a consultant, the consultant isn't making the ultimate decision. Tiger's making the calls."

One thing that probably won't change from when Haney was on the job is the dearth of specifics about what teacher and player are working on. In Como's first weeks on duty, he didn't reveal much more than a few generic platitudes when reporters were within earshot, and he has declined many interview requests.

"I don't see the advantage to Chris getting quoted in a bunch of articles," Haney says. "He's a low-key guy, so I don't think that's a big thing for him anyway. He knows that if you stay with Tiger and he wins, you're going to get more publicity than you ever dreamed of. The best way to stay on the job is to keep a low profile and get results." G

FEEL

COACHING SPECIAL

DROP YOUR CLUB AND LEARN TO PURE IT WITH YOUR IRONS

BY CHRIS COMO

SWING MODEL / JAMIE LOVEMARK



1. SET YOUR LEFT SIDE HIGHER

▸ Without a club, you'll have a better sense for what your body should be feeling. At address for an iron shot, position your left side higher and feel slightly more pressure on your left foot [*left*]. This is a good starting place for making a dynamic backswing and will pre-set your mind for how your body should feel as you progress through the swing.

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FACTOR

2. TURN AND STAY IN PLACE

▸ Mimic your backswing and shift the pressure from your left foot to your right without your body swaying back. Your hip and shoulder turns should feel big and free [*left*], but your right foot and leg need to stay stable. You're making a full backswing while maintaining the feeling that you can drive hard off your right side to start the downswing.

3. DRIVE YOUR HIPS THROUGH

▸ The key to hitting penetrating irons is to deloft the clubface without hitting down too much. Many players think they have to force their hands down, which produces erratic contact. That's why it's great to do this drill without a club; you can focus on the feel in your body without worrying about impact. Shift and rotate your hips forward, feeling your left side move up and out of the way [*right*]. Clear your hips, and imagine the clubhead 'collecting' the ball. That's how to hit with a delofted face.

—WITH MATTHEW RUDY

Chris Como is based at Gleneagles Country Club in Plano, Texas and is a swing consultant to Tiger Woods



COVER STORY

COACHING JORDAN

CAMERON McCORMICK

On taking Jordan Spieth from prodigy to PGA Tour star, what Aussie golf can learn from the US system, sneaking onto the Melbourne Sandbelt courses as a youngster and how he would coach Tiger Woods.



Australian Cameron McCormick [*left*] has coached American world No.9 Jordan Spieth since the age of 12.



SUPERCOACH

JORDAN SPIETH IS THE TYPICAL ALL-ROUNDER – when he's playing his best, everything clicks. In the final round of the Australian Open last year, he shot one of the greatest rounds I've ever seen him play to win the tournament. Putting and short game kept him in it when, like every golfer faces, he was misfiring with his ballstriking.

JORDAN'S PLAYED GREAT GOLF FOR A LONG TIME, but his skills are sharper since the break after the Ryder Cup. It showed him that rest and time to practise can have a significant influence.

I MAY GET IN TROUBLE FOR SAYING THIS, but admittedly my fondest memories of playing golf in Australia are sneaking onto some of the Melbourne Sandbelt courses (which courses exactly will remain undisclosed) with a few friends and playing them. It was like a taste of the 'tour player life' – I was playing on the courses I'd watched some of Australia's best golfers compete on. It's probably the only time I've exhibited any degree of 'larrikin behaviour'.

KINGSTON HEATH, National Golf Club (especially the Moonah and Ocean courses), Royal Melbourne, Victoria and Commonwealth are my favourite courses in Australia. To me, they are a great sampling of brilliance in hole and course design. Many of these courses are bereft of dramatic landscape, yet provide the player with visual beauty and skill challenge from moderate to extreme levels – depending on how each club chooses to condition its course.

THE BEST THING ABOUT MOVING TO TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY on a golf scholarship as a teenager was creating a new identity and carrying with me the spirit of what it is to be an Australian in a foreign land. In my first five years in the US, I crossed paths with only two other Australians. I was unique and relished the opportunity of ambassadorship.

FOR ME, COACHING IS ABOUT BRIDGING DESIRE, will and ability into results for someone that comes to me and says, "These are my goals. Will you help me achieve them?" That's why I love what I do.

NOT HAVING A COACH WHEN I WAS A PLAYER SHED A LIGHT on how, with the correct messages delivered at the correct time, I can speed someone's progress towards their desire. (Author) Anais Nin said, "We see things as we are, not as they are." This was true for me, as I believe we need someone to be objective. When you combine objectivity with experience – that's powerful.

AMERICA HAS AN IMMENSELY GOOD PLATFORM for incubating interest in younger golfers and a great framework of competition –locally, regionally and nationally. Excellent coaches and population and participation numbers don't hurt American golf either. If the Australian system could inject more youth into the participation pool, that would be a good start.

THERE IS A GREAT NUMBER OF AUSSIE PLAYERS represented in the world golf rankings – both

IMAGES SUPPLIED



professional and amateur, men and women, as well as great coaches that I know of.

▸▸▸

RYAN RUFFELS, LUCAS HERBERT AND TODD SINNOTT are a fantastic representation of some of the young Australian men who are going to emerge soon on golf's world stage. They're being supported by great state and national programs and opportunities will arrive on the US PGA Tour if they so desire. There are also a number of very talented women coming out of Australia.

▸▸▸

FROM DAY ONE, JORDAN SHOWED ME SOME SPECIAL TRAITS. I actually do a presentation on this material that covers 90 minutes, so it's hard to say in a few words. I will say the overriding premise to forging his career was to support him with advice to enhance his skills, over and above the needs of stylistic trends and ideals.

▸▸▸

WHEN HE FIRST CAME TO ME AS A 12-YEAR-OLD AT BROOK HOLLOW GOLF CLUB in Dallas, Jordan was a very reserved thinker who processed things and wasn't afraid of providing confident, frank answers. He also wasn't shy in demonstrating belief in himself.

▸▸▸

I'M A GOLF NERD, a workaholic and I'm generally curious as to the 'what' and 'why' of everything. This has translated into a love of the science of the game, both the visible and invisible. I'd say my thirst for knowledge and answers extends into any domain that could possibly improve a player's performance.

▸▸▸

IF TIGER WOODS CAME TO ME and asked me to be his full-time coach, I'd shift him into reverse as quickly as I could and take him back in his career as far as I could. I'd look to revisit the movement patterns he employed from his most successful times and, more importantly, his mindset and identity from his most successful times.

▸▸▸

MY WIFE, SOMER, STARTED PLAYING GOLF WITH ME before we were married but after the birth of our first child, Bella, she found she had no time. Bella is now 6 and enjoys golf when it involves time with her Daddy. My son, Callan, recently turned 5 and loves golf, from the playing to the watching of it. I'll do my best not to get in the way, but I will provide a pathway should they desire to travel it.

▸▸▸

THE NO.1 MISTAKE I SEE AMATEURS MAKE is thinking the skill set they currently have is insufficient to scoring better. With no change in a player's movements/form, they can improve their scoring simply by enhancing their 'Golf IQ' – the playing knowledge best described as being able to evaluate what the shot demands, the environmental conditions, the player's skills and then establishing an intent for the shot which provides the greatest probability of success.

▸▸▸

I LOVE RETURNING TO AUSTRALIA. Life for me is now in the US, but I'll always think of Australia as home. It's in my blood. I hope to make it a yearly trip, as my parents are ageing and I miss Australia more as time passes. Additionally, it's nice to share my homeland with others ... so hopefully in years to come I can encourage other players to venture Down Under with me.

– Interviewed by Evin Priest

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FIVE THINGS

AMATEURS CAN LEARN FROM JORDAN SPIETH

THERE are no real weakness in Jordan Spieth's game. He works at his skills with the diligence of a player who realises he will only reach his goal of personal mastery and those outcome-based measures of success (wins and world rankings) through sustained work at improving his skill set.

1 **VISION: Set your sights on what you desire and never lose sight. It's easy to be distracted even by the day-to-day tedium of life.**

2 **SKILLS TRUMP STYLE: It will never look perfect; it doesn't exist so forget about pursuing it. What you need to find is a functional fit between what you're capable of and what the course/environment demands.**

3 **HARD WORK: There are very few barriers to playing better golf, but the absence of hard work is most definitely one of them. Check the box on time and quality of investment and you should feel good about expanding your possibilities for improved performance.**

4 **SELF AWARENESS: It's hard to know what to alter when things are not going your way. If you're not aware of what is occurring mentally and physically, your chance of success is greatly diminished. Develop the skill of self-awareness – like Jordan has – to improve your ability to change your performance destiny when and where you want.**

5 **EMBRACE THE TRUE CHALLENGE: Most people, when faced with the chance to compete at higher levels, wilt. Not Jordan. He has always recognised that it's the golf course, not the other players, that he's competing against. He realises the battle is between his skills and the course and should he win that battle it doesn't matter who else is playing. He will have succeeded.**

– Cameron McCormick

Spieth celebrates his Australian Open victory at The Australian Golf Club last year after shooting a course-record 8-under 63, enough for a six-shot win.

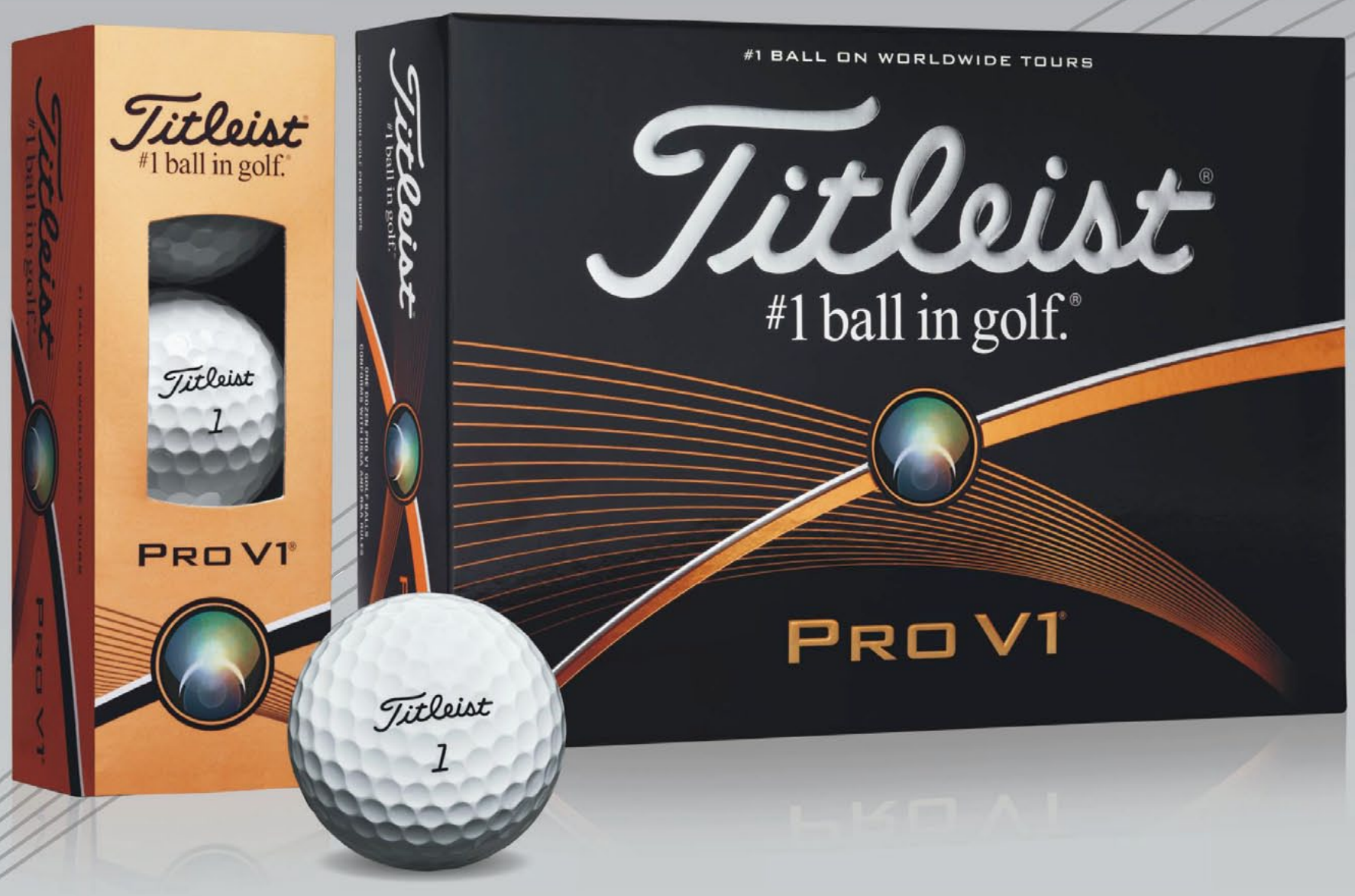





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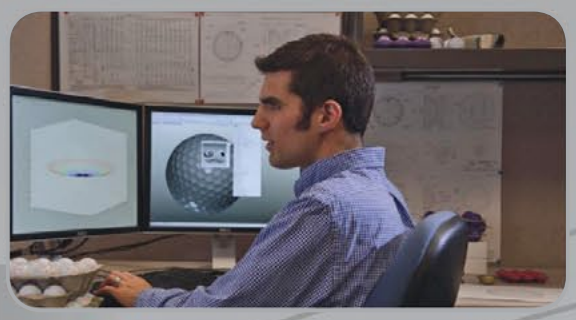
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In March 2001, just four months after launching to golf shops, Titleist Pro V1 became the best-selling golf ball in the marketplace.

"The launch of Pro V1 was especially significant in that for the very first time, the best performing golf ball for tour players was also the best performing golf ball for all golfers," says Mary Lou Bohn, Vice President of Titleist Golf Ball Marketing and Communications.



BEHIND THE DESIGN
CELEBRATING 15 YEARS OF PRO V1

PERFORMANCE

"You no longer had to choose between distance over short-game control, or durability over soft feel. There were no trade-offs. Pro V1 delivered total performance."

Pro V1 and Pro V1x – which launched in 2003 – have been the most played golf balls at every level of competitive golf and the best-selling models around the world ever since.

Titleist puts its success down to the company's Golf Ball R&D and Operations teams, which boasts more than 20,000 years of golf ball-making expertise that have worked every day to make "the #1 ball in golf" even better with each new generation.

The company's wave of success is set to continue this year following the launch of the new 2015 Titleist Pro V1 and Pro V1x models. Titleist says these balls are the result of a continuous process rooted in rigorous research and development, technological advancements, comprehensive player testing and validation, and precision manufacturing.

CONTINUING A LEGACY

DESIGNED for all golfers seeking to shoot lower scores, 2015 Pro V1 and Pro V1x deliver exceptional distance with consistent flight, more short game control and even softer feel from a new, patented urethane elastomer cover formulation, and long lasting durability. Comparatively, Pro V1 has a softer feel, slightly more long game spin and a penetrating trajectory for a shallower angle of descent for more roll.

Pro V1x offers a slightly firmer feel, lower long game spin and launches higher with a steeper angle of descent.

The total performance of Pro V1 and Pro V1x, tee-through-green – providing the best combination of distance, flight, short-game



"I used the same ball the entire day today and it still flew perfectly. The changes to the new golf ball have been big for me and I've been playing well since changing."

– 2014 Australian Open champion, Jordan Spieth

scoring control and feel – makes them the best fit for any golfer.

"Golfers often ask us what sets Pro V1 and Pro V1x apart from other golf balls. You can't just point to one or two things. The difference is everything," says Bill Morgan, Senior Vice President, Titleist Golf Ball R&D. "We have more people with more experience designing and making golf balls, the largest intellectual property portfolio and the most sophisticated precision manufacturing processes. The 2015 Pro V1 and Pro V1x are the culmination of all that knowledge and all of that technology.

"The original Pro V1 was revolutionary, no question, but we've learned a lot in the last 15 years and these new Pro V1 models are the best we've ever made."

The Titleist Golf Ball R&D team is made up of chemists, physicists, mathematicians, computer scientists, engineers and technicians, as well as PGA professionals and turf management specialists. Due to their work, Titleist owns the industry's largest portfolio of golf ball intellectual property with more than 1,000 patents. Since 2010, Titleist has been awarded nearly 50 per cent of all golf ball patents issued in the United States. There are more than 100 patents that cover the technologies and manufacturing processes for 2015 Pro V1 and Pro V1x combined.

Eighty years after the first Titleist golf ball was produced, the Titleist operations team is comprised of over 1,100 associates with an average tenure of 20 years. These associates manufacture every Titleist golf ball to exacting standards in Titleist owned and operated facilities – there are about 90 process and product quality checks for Pro V1; about 120 for the dual-core Pro V1x – assuring that every golf ball performs consistently for every golfer, every round and on every type of shot.

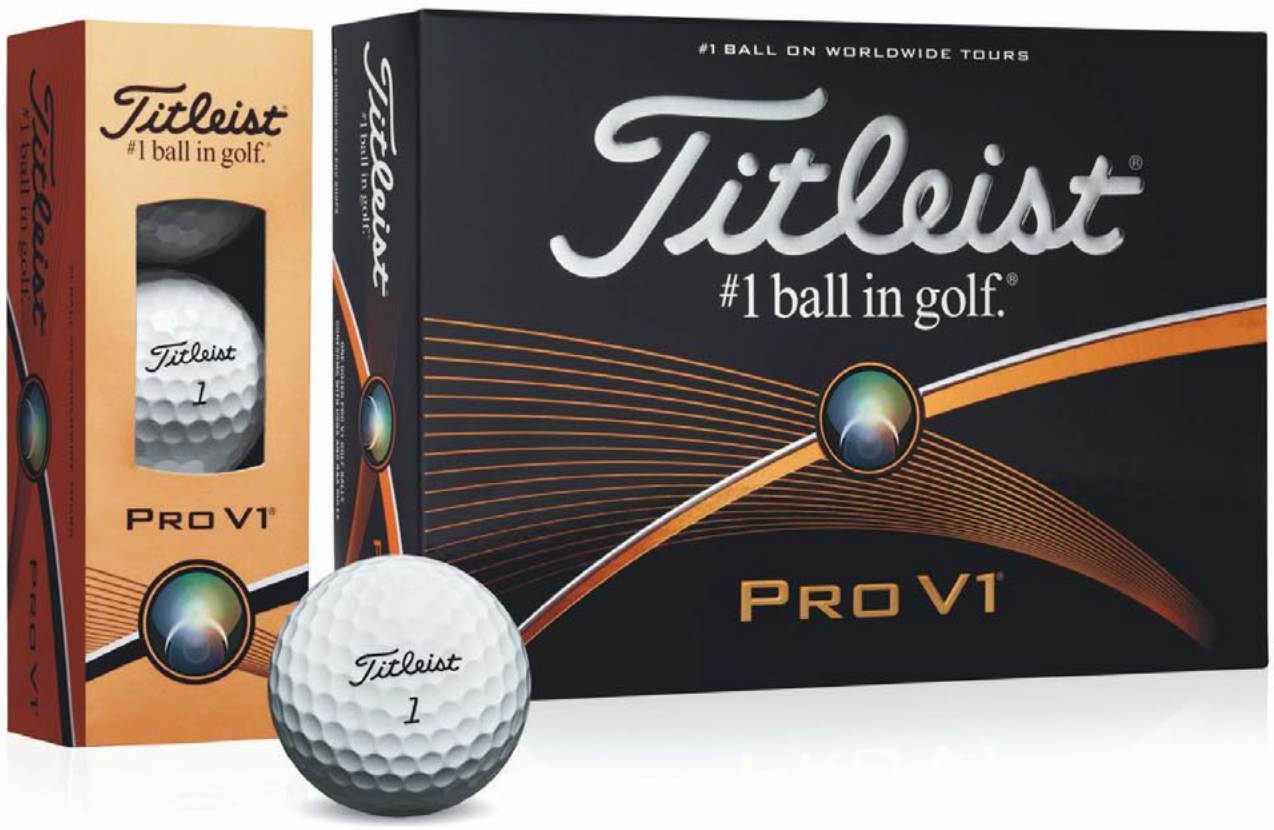
Before being introduced to the market, new Pro V1 and Pro V1x golf balls are tested and validated by golfers at every level of the game, from the world's best tour players to amateurs of all skill levels and swing speeds. Since 2015 Pro V1 and Pro V1x were first introduced on the US PGA Tour in October last year, more than 100 players have put the new models in play around the world, with Bubba Watson, Jordan Spieth, Charley Hoffman, Gary Stal and Jimmy Walker each trusting new Pro V1x to victory.

At the 2014 Australian Open, Spieth used the new Pro V1x golf ball to what he called "the best round I have ever played" – a final-round 8-under par 63 to win by six shots. Spieth's round set the course record on a gusty day at The Australian Golf Club, leading several media members to suggest it may have been the best round in the event's 110-year history.

"It obviously performed well," Spieth said after the round. "I used the same ball the entire day today and it still flew perfectly. The changes to the new golf ball have been big for me and I've been playing well since changing."

WHAT'S NEW WITH THE 2015 MODELS?

THE 2015 Pro V1 and Pro V1x golf balls feature a new, patented thermoset urethane elastomer cover that delivers more short



game spin and control, and softer feel – while maintaining their distance and flight characteristics, and best-in-class durability. The softer, reformulated cover system improves feel, sound and short game scoring control, providing golfers the confidence and performance to hit it closer to the hole.

"When we set out to improve Pro V1 and Pro V1x, the product development process always starts with asking golfers how we can help them shoot lower scores," says Bohn. "Since golfers have had such resounding success with Pro V1 and Pro V1x, this time around, they told us, 'Don't change much. I love the distance. I love the scoring performance. I love the durability. If you can give me slightly more spin in the short game as well as even softer feel, I'll take it. I just don't want to give anything up.' So that became our design goal."

The new Pro V1 and Pro V1x also maintain their long-lasting durability. The new urethane cover, combined with the improved paint system that debuted on the 2013 models, keeps Pro V1 and Pro V1x whiter and brighter longer throughout the course of play. The cover and paint system also contributes to an aerodynamically more consistent golf ball.

"The breakthrough we made in durability with 2013 Pro V1 and Pro V1x really opened up the doors for us in terms of experimentation with our cover formulation," says Morgan. "Our urethane is so resilient that as we softened it, we were able to increase short game spin and enhance the feel while maintaining its abrasion resistance."

CHOOSING BETWEEN PRO V1 & PRO V1x

THE Pro V1 is a three-piece, multiple component technology with a very soft compression ZG process core, ionomeric casing layer, softer thermoset urethane elastomer cover and spherically-tiled 352 tetrahedral dimple design. This ball has a softer feel, slightly more long-game spin and a more penetrating trajectory for a shallower angle of descent and thus more roll than Pro V1x.

The Pro V1x is a four-piece, multi-component technology with a ZG process dual core, ionomeric casing layer, softer thermoset urethane elastomer cover and spherically-tiled 328 tetrahedral dimple design. This ball has a slightly firmer feel and lower long-game spin and launches higher with a steeper angle of descent than Pro V1.

PRICE AND AVAILABILITY

THE 2015 Pro V1 and Pro V1x golf balls are now available in golf shops across Australia with a suggested retail price of $74.95 per dozen.

Both models are available in standard and custom play numbers.

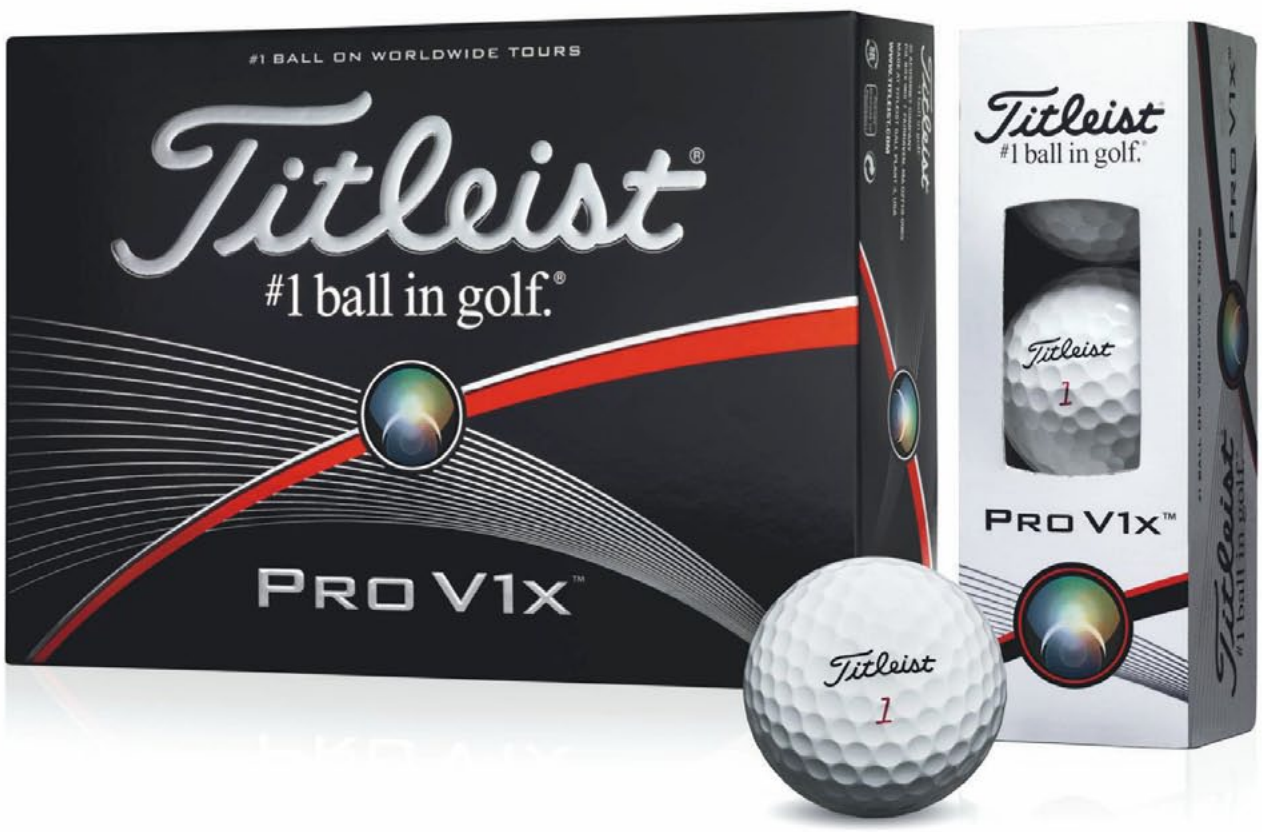
Standard dozens include play numbers 1-4 (low) and 5-8 (high).

For more information on the new Pro V1 range, check out **titleist.com.au**



"The original Pro V1 was revolutionary, no question, but we've learned a lot in the last 15 years and these new Pro V1 models are the best we've ever made."

– SVP Titleist Golf Ball R&D, Bill Morgan



LOVE

HOW YOUR 7-IRON CAN HELP YOU HIT EVERY CLUB BETTER

BY RANDY SMITH

WHEN I walk the range, most players I see are hitting one of two clubs: driver or 7-iron. They're hitting driver because they're searching for something. They're hitting 7-iron because it's their favourite club – the perfect combination of a long iron's distance and a short iron's forgiveness. They love hitting it, so they literally wear it out. Go check your bag. If your 7-iron has more wear on it than any club besides your sand wedge, follow my pointers here. I'll show you how to transform every club in your bag into a replica of that trusty old 7. The secret is understanding what puts you in such a comfort zone with that club, then re-creating those conditions with the other ones. It's easier than you think. – WITH MATTHEW RUDY

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+
OAKLEY
top and skort

1

THE SETUP IS COMFY

▸ The 7-iron is where your normal setup and the design of your clubs intersect perfectly. You play the ball just ahead of centre in your stance – where most golfers put it for every shot – and that happens to be the ideal spot for a 7-iron. You can't hit a long iron from there because the club doesn't fit that workspace. You see the lack of loft on the face, and you try to lift it. To hit any club well, get the ball position right. For short irons, play it centre; for a 5-iron, an inch ahead of the 7; for hybrids and fairway woods, off the front heel; for driver, off the front instep.

2

YOU DON'T FORCE IT

▸ Golfers like the 7-iron because it's average. You make an average-size turn, swing at a normal speed, and the ball gets in the air. You struggle with longer clubs, and shorter ones, because you either overswing for distance or swing all-arms to try to gain control. Instead, feel as if you swing the same length and speed to a balanced finish with every club.

3

IT GETS MORE ACTION

▸ How does a club become your favourite? You have good results with it, so you run to it on the course whenever you can. You can hit a bunch of good ones in a row, so it's a beauty at the range. But that leaves you out of practice with your other clubs, even scared to hit them. Spend more time with the weak ones; you'll get to like them better.

4

CREATE UNIFORMITY

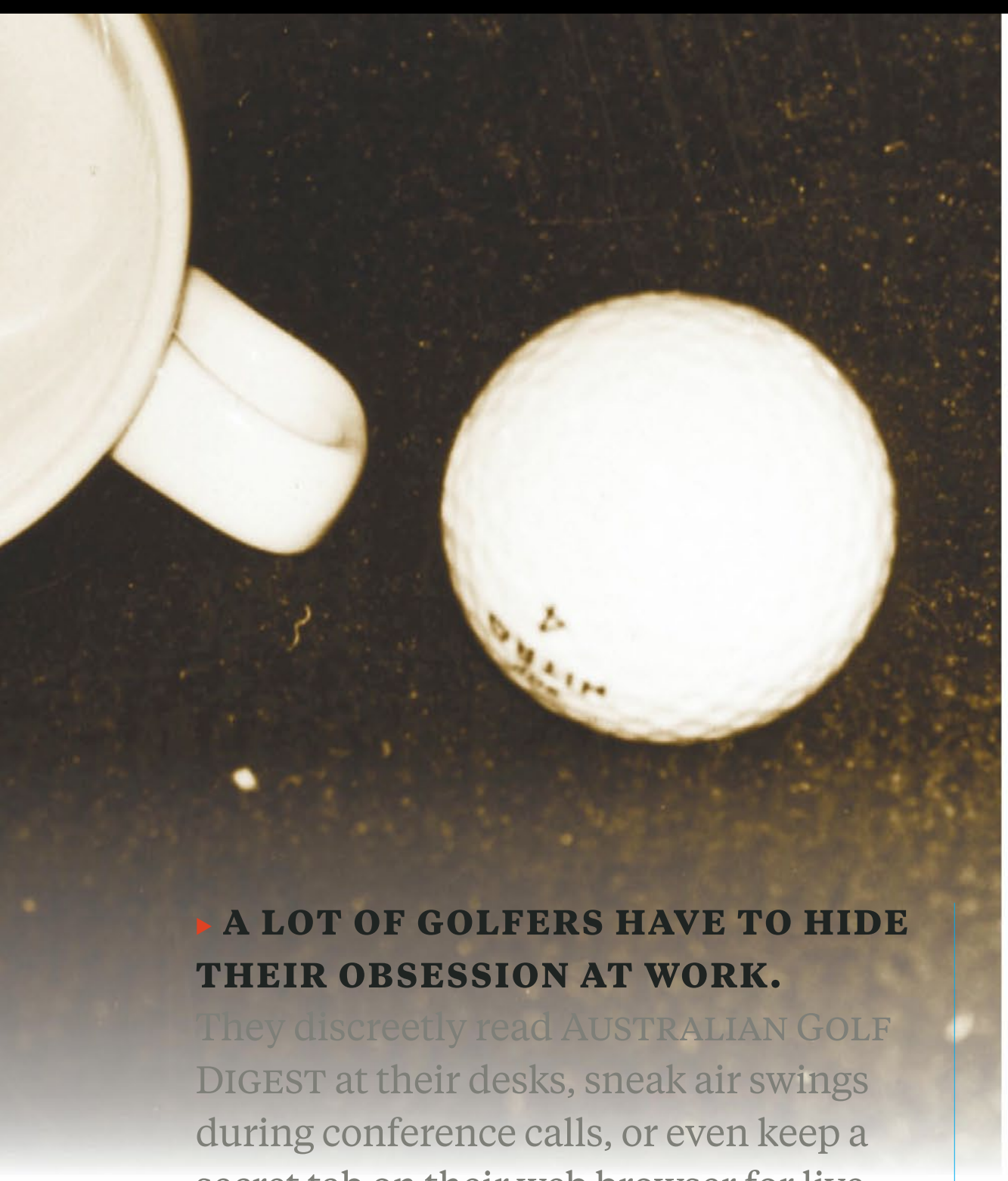
▸ You don't need the touch of a surgeon to know that some clubs just feel better. If you love your 7-iron, take your set to a clubfitter and have the rest of your irons built off it. A club's head weight, length and shaft frequency all work together to produce feel and performance.



Lucky bastards!

The 10 Coolest Jobs in Golf

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▸ A LOT OF GOLFERS HAVE TO HIDE THEIR OBSESSION AT WORK.

They discreetly read AUSTRALIAN GOLF DIGEST at their desks, sneak air swings during conference calls, or even keep a secret tab on their web browser for live-streaming the US PGA Tour. Most are ashamed of these habits, unless maybe they're one of the lucky Australians who blissfully call golf their "job."

The golf industry generates $55 billion in annual wages. Not all golf jobs, however, are created equal. Some allow more access to fun things a lot of us would pay to do, no less get paid. We identified 10 people from overseas with the coolest gigs. Everyone on our list is under 35 years old, which means they're looking ahead to golf-tastic lives.

NO.1 BAG IN GOLF
8 CONSECUTIVE YEARS
2006-2013*

*As voted by the Golf Trade.



Pictured:
Blue – Magnetic Pro

NOW WITH...
The NEW Klic-Lok System

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by **Ashley Mayo**



▸ Chad Coleman [*left*] uses Callaway's equipment trove to change his grips often.

CHAD COLEMAN
26 / *social-media manager*

1. Six hundred thousand – that's how many people Chad Coleman chats with every day from Callaway Golf's social-media handles. "Since April 2012, there have been maybe five Callaway tweets that have been posted by someone else," Coleman says, "and that's because it was my wedding day." The self-described perfectionist carefully crafts the messages that are published on Callaway's Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Vine and Tumblr accounts.

"The quality of the content we post is high, and it's unique," Coleman says. "Whether that's putting a bunch of GoPro cameras on Ryo Ishikawa and asking him to hit trick shots or prying information from our engineers, I showcase the talents of our staff."

Coleman graduated in 2011 with a journalism degree and first worked at Rockfish Interactive, a digital-advertising company. While at Rockfish, Coleman used Twitter to network with influential people in the golf industry, pinging them with thoughts and comments. This persistent social-media networking earned him an interview with Callaway.

"I don't have a normal life," Coleman says. He has two iPhones and often drains both batteries and an external battery pack before the day is done. "I'm literally always on," he says, "but who cares?"

MICHAEL CHUPKA
29 / *head pro at Pacific Dunes*

2. To experience Bandon Dunes Golf Resort once in a lifetime is something most golfers only dream about; to call it your office is ludicrous. Michael Chupka is the head pro at Pacific Dunes, in Oregon, which is ranked second on Golf Digest's list of America's 100 Greatest Public Courses, and he's surrounded by three other courses in the top 15.

"I get to avoid a desk job and play amazing golf," says Chupka, from Virginia, who played for James Madison University. He spent one summer as a counsellor at a junior golf camp connected to KemperLesnik, the Chicago-based firm that is the management company for Bandon Dunes, so when the resort was looking for interns, Chupka came highly recommended. He rotated as an intern at each of Bandon Dunes' courses before becoming an assistant at Pacific Dunes. "I became a head pro less than four years after starting as an intern," he says.
"I pinch myself all the time."

Chupka tees it up about twice a week. "My game has certainly changed from playing lots of links golf. I have a better understanding of how to play. Being a perfectionist is not what golf, or life, is about."

Even if you have a perfect life.

BROOKE EMORY
20 / *buying & marketing assistant*

3. Vogue, GQ, WWD, Golf Fashion Weekly and Style.com are on Brooke Emory's required reading material each week. "I'm an artist, and a big part of my job is to keep up with the latest fashion trends and up-and-coming brands," she says.

When Emory sees something she likes, she alerts her boss, Adrienne Cass, the co-founder of TrendyGolf. Deciding which labels will be donned by James Driscoll, TrendyGolf's sponsored player on the US PGA Tour, is a big change from Emory's first career as a professional hip-hop dancer, but the young woman with only a high school diploma is happy for the stability. "I always had a passion for fashion," she says. "And I was a part-time stylist when I was a dancer."

Emory started in TrendyGolf's customer-service department but quickly became Cass' first assistant, travelling to tour events and international venues to help style fashion shoots. Emory also helped Cass launch TrendySports, a website that highlights trends in skiing, tennis, gym and running clothes. "Golf is a little step behind the fashion industry," Emory says. "But we stay ahead to bring fashion to golfers."

So don't worry, there's a shopper whose job is to save you from your bad decisions.

MARTY JERTSON
34 / *director of product development*

4. "My job is a unique blend of what I'm good at doing and what I like to do," says Marty Jertson, who designs and develops Ping golf clubs within two years of their market debut. (Other designers focus on longer-term, more exploratory projects.)

What makes Jertson's job extra cool is that his company encourages him to play competitively. He has played in the PGA Professional National Championship four times, has Monday-qualified for two PGA Tour events and competed in the 2011 and 2012 PGA Championships.

After graduating with a degree in mechanical engineering, he tried mini-tours for 18 months. "I had aspirations of playing on the US PGA Tour," he says. "But as a realist and a mathematician, I knew my probability of making it wasn't very good." That's when Jertson began working at Ping and studying under senior designers. He designed his first product, the Rapture hybrid, in 2005. "The first time you see your own product in stores and see people looking at it on the rack is a very proud moment."

A typical day can mean researching new designs or discussing product strategy, or hitting prototype clubs on the range outside his office. Tour players like Billy Horschel, Lee Westwood and Miguel Angel Jimenez might show up. "We ask them about problems they're trying to solve instead of asking them what they want," Jertson says. "In that way, we try to take the Apple approach: People can't verbalise what they need until they see it."

Teeing it up in major championships with clubs you designed yourself? Pretty cool.

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STEVE LOHMEYER
32 / *US PGA Tour caddie*

5. "Besides being a PGA Tour player, I've got the best job in golf," Steve Lohmeyer says. "Nothing else could compare to the competitiveness, the exercise, the ability to see the world."

In 2014, Lohmeyer was on the bag for 29 events in which Brendon Todd earned $US3,396,747 (18th on the money list). "I have a lucrative career now," says Lohmeyer, who prefers not to disclose the specifics of his pay structure, though a base of $1,500 per week plus 8 per cent of prizemoney isn't uncommon. Lohmeyer never planned on being a caddie. He played golf at Kent State University (Ohio), and soon after he graduated he accepted a four-month internship at Ping Golf. That internship led to a job as a product specialist, but his position was eliminated in a 2008 round of cuts.

"It was a blessing in disguise," Lohmeyer says. That's when Aussie Tour profesisonal Michael Sim, an acquaintance he met through college golf, asked Lohmeyer if he'd caddie for him. "I had no idea what I was doing. I'd never even used a yardage book." Sim showed Lohmeyer exactly how he needed to get better. Eventually Lohmeyer began working for Scott Langley, and then Todd. "Todd asked if I wanted to work with him for just one week in 2013 and he said he'd keep me around if he liked me. By Tuesday of that week, he asked me to book the rest of my year. He loved my positivity."

Competing again is what Lohmeyer loves most. "I'm not the one pulling the trigger, but I gotta be the rock. I gotta be the one who doesn't show much emotion and make sure he stays level. In what other sport can someone say, 'Hey, I was right there with that player'? There's nobody else who gets right in there as much as caddies do."





AIDAN O'CONNOR
31 / *golf-course mapper*

6. The global recession hit Aidan O'Connor hard. In 2011, his job as a construction-site manager was axed. A civil engineer, he decided to tap into











▸ Top row, from left: Patterson (*dark pants*) handles details at a photo shoot with TaylorMade tour staff. Rhebb rocks out while moving dirt at Cabot Cliffs. Emory hanging with Donald Trump.

▸ Bottom row, from left: Chupka on the tee at the par-3 11th at Pacific Dunes. Jertson at work designing a Ping driver he'll likely use in competition. Ryan's souvenir wall of media credentials is growing. Ramsdell [*centre*] shows off the day's prize catch at Streamsong.



the growing use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). He taught himself how to fly drones and then founded ASM Ireland, a company that specialises in aerial surveying.

"We map all types of terrain, from quarries and mines to coastal erosion, but as keen golfers, we most enjoy mapping golf courses," O'Connor says. These maps, which are used for 3-D flyovers in television broadcasts, for course redevelopment and for golf-course apps and yardage books, use hundreds of high-resolution photographs stitched together. The resolution is 300 times greater than a Google Earth image. "Footprints in the sand are visible if someone hasn't raked the bunker," O'Connor says.

ASM Ireland helped to map Muirfield and Royal Liverpool for the broadcasts of the 2013 and 2014 British Open Championships, but O'Connor says the most interesting project was Trump International Golf Links in County Clare, Ireland. "We surveyed the course just after it had suffered enormous hurricane damage. Entire holes had been washed away overnight. Our map ended up being used by a large variety of different engineering consultancies." O'Connor plans to continue to travel the world with UAVs, especially in the US, capturing images of the greatest golf courses and playing as many as he can.

▸ Caddieing after losing his desk job proved "a blessing in disguise" for Lohmeyer [*below*].



KENNETH PATTERSON II
29 / *project leader / athlete activator*

7. "Anytime we need an athlete to do something other than play golf, I'm the guy," Kenneth Patterson says. "Everybody knows I love people, so when TaylorMade created this role in January 2013, they knew I wouldn't do anything that would jeopardise the relationships we have with our athletes."

When Patterson is at a US PGA Tour event (he went to 20 in 2014, including three majors), TaylorMade-sponsored players know he's their main contact.

"Dustin Johnson will see me wearing a special flat-brimmed hat or a pair of shoes he likes and ask for them. All our tour staffers are just normal guys, and if they need a club or a question answered, they come straight to me."

Managing player logistics sometimes spills over to playing golf and dining with superstars. One evening last year at Augusta National, it was just Patterson, Johnson and a few others watching the NCAA Division I basketball championship game. But Patterson is a testament to the Gary Player quote, "The harder you work, the luckier you get." A First Tee and Jackie Robinson Foundation scholar, he graduated with a degree in mass communications and then started a nine-month internship at TaylorMade that turned into a sports-marketing job after six months. For five years, he tended to TaylorMade's staff of more than 3,000 club professionals. He likes working with elite athletes but also wants to identify up-and-coming stars.

"I want to get more involved in the contract process. I want to have a say in who we sign, whether they're professional golfers or celebrities."

Who says professional social players don't face tough decisions?



THE 5 WORST JOBS IN GOLF?

▸ **Cart girl** You're constantly shooting down random strangers who flirt with you when you're just trying to sell them a drink.

▸ **Port-O-Loo cleaner** About 45,000 people visited Pinehurst each day of the 2014 US Open. One cleaner will tend up to 60 portable toilets daily.

▸ **Squeegee pusher** When there's standing water on the greens, slap on your raingear and get ready to sweat.

▸ **Cleaner at Casino Golf Club** The Australian golf club was recently broken into six times in four weeks. The cleaner answered the latest attempt by locking himself in a cupboard.

▸ **Caddie at Kabul Golf Club** Patrons of the Afghanistan course have become used to being knocked to the ground by nearby explosions. The UN instituted a land-mine-sweeping program there in 2004.

TYLER RAMSDELL
24 / *recreation manager*

8. A bad day for Tyler Ramsdell is when he doesn't catch a fish, but Streamsong Resort recreation manager hasn't had many bad days. He supervises non-golf activities for guests, so a typical day might start with guiding a bass-fishing excursion on one of the Florida property's freshwater streams or lakes, and then after lunch taking a group to the sporting-clays course. When the resort opened in 2012, there were dozens of applicants for the position, and after three rounds of interviews, executives chose Ramsdell. In addition to being energetic and personable, his resume seemed just about perfect. At 17, he revamped the recreation program at the high-end Mountain View Grand Resort, and in college he majored in hospitality and tourism. He has also competed in professional bass-fishing tournaments. "I recently fished with Justin Rose," Ramsdell says. "One of the most easy-going guys I've ever met. If you didn't know who he was, you'd never guess he was a professional golfer."

This past year Ramsdell also had a great time giving Paul Azinger a tour of the property. "We have guests from all over the world, and it's just awesome to hear their stories." Though his job is to help guests take their minds off golf, he's allowed to play Streamsong's Red and Blue courses whenever he likes, just as long as the tee sheet isn't full. "I've often gone fishing, clay shooting and played golf in the same day." And if it was payday, even cashed a cheque, too.

KEITH RHEBB
33 / *course shaper*

9. "School was a challenge," Keith Rhebb says. "People told me I'd never be successful in life." He intended to get a college degree in landscape architecture, but a year and a half in, ditched school to work at Landscapes Unlimited, a golf-course construction company based in Nebraska.

"I worked on projects with a variety of architects and design philosophies," he says. "The training exceeded what I could've picked up in a classroom."

Rhebb worked on two Bill Coore-Ben Crenshaw projects during his time at Landscapes Unlimited and impressed the architects so much they hired him. "His raw talent and work ethic stood out," Coore says. Since then, Rhebb has anchored chunks of his life in places such as Florida (Streamsong Red), North Carolina (Dormie Club), Canada (Cabot Cliffs), Australia (Lost Farm) and now Japan (Yokohama Country Club). He operates bulldozers and excavators and even finer tools

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"I RECENTLY FISHED WITH JUSTIN ROSE, ONE OF THE MOST EASY-GOING GUYS I'VE EVER MET."

– TYLER RAMSDELL

like rakes and shovels to shape fairways, greens and bunkers.

"I typically work for 20 days and then have 10 days off," he says. "During those 20 days, I live where the project is located. International jobs are different. When I was in Australia, I came home twice in 18 months. My wife flew back and forth to me."

Beyond adhering to Coore & Crenshaw's chosen course routing, Rhebb is encouraged to be creative.

"My typical day on-site begins with looking at what I worked on the day before in the morning light. If I feel stuck, I'll move to a different hole and come back when I can trust myself not to overthink it."

Rhebb will continue shaping courses but also aspires to design and photograph them.

SHANE RYAN
31 / *writer*

10. Building relationships with young US PGA Tour stars isn't what Shane Ryan planned on doing. After college, he moved to New York City to become a novelist, working as an office assistant to make ends meet. Like any aspiring male author, he started a sports blog. "Deadspin linked to one of my first stories," he says, "so I got this big audience really quickly." That's when he decided to enroll at the University of North Carolina's School of Journalism, and during his first year there he wrote a controversial blog post about the dull, uninspiring relationship the media had with college basketball players and coaches.

"It was scary," he says. "People were like, 'You just screwed up your career; you'll never work in journalism because you've pissed everybody off'."

But several prominent sportswriters, including Bill Simmons, admired Ryan's unique and courageous take. Simmons, who was launching Grantland, a sports and pop-culture blog associated with ESPN, hired Ryan to write the morning-after recap of everything that happened in sports the night before. He parlayed that assignment into longer stories about college basketball and, eventually, golf.

"I'm not really a golfer," Ryan says. "But I've always been a golf fan."

At the 2012 Ryder Cup, he wrote an astute, measured feature called "Poulter's Cup." The piece earned him access to more US PGA Tour events. "I discovered early that it's really tough to get interviews with the big players. You just have to be there all the time to slowly build relationships to eventually get some one-on-ones over time."

In 2013, a literary agent approached Ryan, pitching a book about today's young golf superstars. He used the advance to finance travel to 31 tournaments in 2014. The book is scheduled to be in stores this May.

The fiction can wait.

▸ O'Connor launches a drone to map Trump International Golf Links in Scotland.





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A HOME AWAY FROM HOME

What Aussies want in a golf membership – and which clubs are leading the way.

By Evin Priest

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Joining a golf club in Australia is more than deciding what 18-hole layout you're going to play each week. It's about choosing a lifestyle that suits you. First and foremost, you need a course that caters to your golfing ability and aspirations. But of equal importance in your decision is what that club can offer in terms of practice facilities and dedicated instructors, clubhouse amenities, reciprocal rights arrangements and a general feel-good atmosphere for you and your family. It's a decision that will cost you money yet provide you with priceless joy. Sound familiar? >>



IT SEEMS the penny has finally dropped. Australian golf clubs are starting to recognise the changing landscape of golf club membership and the demands of the time-poor golfer. Though traditional seven-day memberships still exist, the industry has evolved to offer a variety of new golfing options – from collaborative club memberships on Queensland's Gold Coast and the Western suburbs of Melbourne that offer access to multiple courses for the price of one, to incentive based-schemes like the Qantas Golf Club that dish up a range of financial benefits and rewards.

Golf Australia's club support manager, Paul Vardy, believes the dynamic nature of the modern membership means golfers have to think about their options more than ever. "First and foremost is the course itself – you want a course layout that suits your ability and golfing aspirtations, has good practice facilities and quality instructors," says Vardy. "Then a potential member has to think about the proximity to home and work, the dining and social options of the club and the subscription, levies and joining fees. Do they suit your budget?

"There are also less obvious but important considerations, such as the club's finances – the balance sheets and likelihood of future levies or subscription hikes, the membership numbers and whether there's a pipeline of new members, the stability of the board's governance and whether the club communicates with members and engages their views."

So which clubs are pioneering a new future for the game? Here are some new initiatives your club should be considering – if they haven't already.

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Collaboration – more than just 18 holes

MEMBERSHIPS that offer playing access to an alliance of golf clubs are growing in demand across the country. AUSTRALIAN GOLF DIGEST reader Tyrone Collins, from Mt Annan in southwest Sydney, said the lack of this type of membership in New South Wales had driven him to use group discount vouchers, rather than join a club. "I'm an avid user of golf deals I find on group discount websites because I can experience a range of courses and play with a mate, all for the price of what a regular membership would cost at my local course," says Collins.

Across the border collaborative efforts are appearing on the Gold Coast, where **Palm Meadows** offers incredible value with a dual membership. The $1795 gold membership includes unlimited golf without green fees, an AGU Handicap, no joining fees and unlimited electric cart use at both Palm Meadows and Gainsborough Greens Golf Club in Pimpama. Palm Meadows is also part of a Platinum Social Membership Card, giving Gold Coast golfers discounted green fees at the Gold Coast Country Club, Windaroo Golf Club and Gainsborough Greens.

Similar value is offered in the western suburbs of Melbourne with the new **GolfWest** initiative, a joining of forces between Eynesbury, Kooringal, Medway, Melton Valley, Sanctuary Lakes, Northern, Werribee Park and Sunshine golf clubs. This reciprocal rights arrangement allows its participating club members to play each of the eight courses at least once a year.

Location, Location, Location

SEVERAL Aussie courses boast a location with 'something special' that could appeal to you. **Moore Park Golf Club** is the closest public course to the Sydney CBD, and it also happens to be one of the best-run courses in the country. Because of its prime real estate within the historic Moore Park precinct, the club offers views of the Sydney skyline and boasts an impressive 60-bay, all-weather driving range [*above*] that's home to the Sydney Golf Academy.

Further up the NSW coast, **Magenta Shores Golf and Country Club** has become a residential golfing community with retirees opting to buy real estate surrounding the region's only private course. In addition to playing the No.26-ranked layout in the



'We needed a succession plan – the average age of our members is 58, but that figure used to be higher.'

– Castle Hill Country Club general manager Melissa Ellis

country, members enjoy the Magenta lifestyle – including the country club and health and fitness centre and spa treatments at the attached Pullman Resort.

Although 27-hole courses are sadly becoming a rarity, especially close to city precincts, **Keperra Country Golf Club** is an exception. Located just 15 minutes from the Brisbane CBD, Keperra is a relaxing and challenging course where veteran tour professionals John Senden and Peter Senior mastered their craft. Location isn't everything for a golfer, but for a time-poor one, it can make all the difference.

Fun for all ages

GOLF has several universal issues that need to be addressed – an ageing population, a lack of female participants and the fact it's just too expensive for many families. However, there are clubs in Australia that aren't afraid to tackle these problems head-on and are taking a crystal ball approach.

Castle Hill Country Club, in Sydney's northwest, is one of them. "We needed a succession plan – the average age of our members is 58, but that figure used to be higher," says general manager Melissa Ellis [*above*]. The club ran a successful promotion targeting 21 to 35-year-olds and has spent time and money investing into the "Tyro Golf" program for juniors, as well as encouraging amateurs to keep playing after high school.

Down the road, **Oatlands Golf Club** is a progressive club offering excellent initiatives like Limited Playing Memberships. The LPM has no joining fee and, for $24 a week, includes an AGU handicap, 35 rounds annually (10 in competition) and all the usual benefits of the club. Oatlands has also been showcased by Golf Australia in its 'Case Studies' portfolio for two strategies. The 'Friday Frenzy' was a member-initiated program for a par-3 contest after work each Friday, where the dress code was relaxed and members played a nearest-to-the-pin contest. 'Get Started @ Oatlands' is an eight-week clinic designed to get females introduced to golf, and was so successful that 90 per cent of participants joined the club and a men's under 35 years version has since been created.

Howlong Country Golf Club, near Albury in NSW, has taken the reigns on growing the game for the future. Not only does Howlong offer a scenic course just metres from the Murray River, the Howlong MYGolf Junior Program was designed for making golf fun and interesting for 8 to 14-year-olds. After starting with five community coaches and 15 children, Howlong's MYGolf class grew to 120 participants, had the age minimum of 8 years removed for the youngsters and is now being rolled out in surrounding Murray District towns.

Choosing a club that has a strong platform in place to cater for your entire family should be high on your list.

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Bang for your buck

WITH the Australian sports market more competitive than ever, incentive-based golf club memberships have emerged as a popular choice. Headlining the trend is the recently launched **Qantas Golf Club**.

Qantas Frequent Flyers can join for free or pay $249 for premium access, and the online club provides the ability to book tee times at public and private courses throughout Australia, the maintenance of an official Golf Australia handicap, exclusive access to domestic and international golf events and tournaments and access to a wide range of golf holiday packages and Qantas Points for each dollar spent on qantasgolfclub.com.

Another club taking golf to the skies is South Australia's **Kooyonga Golf Club**, which has struck a valuable partnership with Singapore Airlines. Golfers who join both the Singapore Airlines KrisFlyer points program and Kooyonga receive 50,000 KrisFlyer points – the equivalent of a return ticket to Chiang Mai, Phnom Penh, Singapore, Hanoi, or Hong Kong. "Clubs of the future will need to look at implementing additional value-added benefits to club membership," says Adrian Edgar, general manager of Kooyonga. Another innovative club in Adelaide giving its members something extra is **The Grange Golf Club,** which is tapping into a more health-conscious population with the introduction of a 5-star gym. The health club is unique in that it provides a beautiful outlook over the first hole of the West Course, with the glass designed so golfers can't see in.

Just outside Perth, **The Vines Golf and Country Club** has taken advantage of its position as a travel hub, offering members reciprocal rights at prestigious golf courses around Australia, as well as Brunei, England, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mauritius, Singapore, Wales and Austria. Even miners can strike gold at the Western Australian club, with The Vines offering a $1099 fly in, fly out membership with no joining fee for those who travel to the region only for work.

Now that's what we call making the most of your target market.

GETTY IMAGES









Magenta Shores Golf and Country Club

▸ Have you ever considered belonging to one of the highest rated golf courses in the Country? Well there is a limited opportunity at Magenta Shores on the Central Coast of NSW just 60 minutes from Sydney.

Magenta Shores Golf and Country Club is a traditional links designed course, which has been rated in the Top 50 courses in Australia by Australian Golf Digest since it opened almost 10 years ago. The course has now matured and is immaculately presented year round. Its sandy base allows play, even in carts, when many Sydney courses are closed.

With the Pacific Ocean on one side and Tuggerah Lakes on the other, every hole at Magenta Shores requires the golfer to play with a keen appreciation of the weather, together with the rolling dunes and natural bunkering of this Ross Watson masterpiece. Magenta Shores is a private golf club, owned by the members and does not differentiate between ladies and gentlemen.

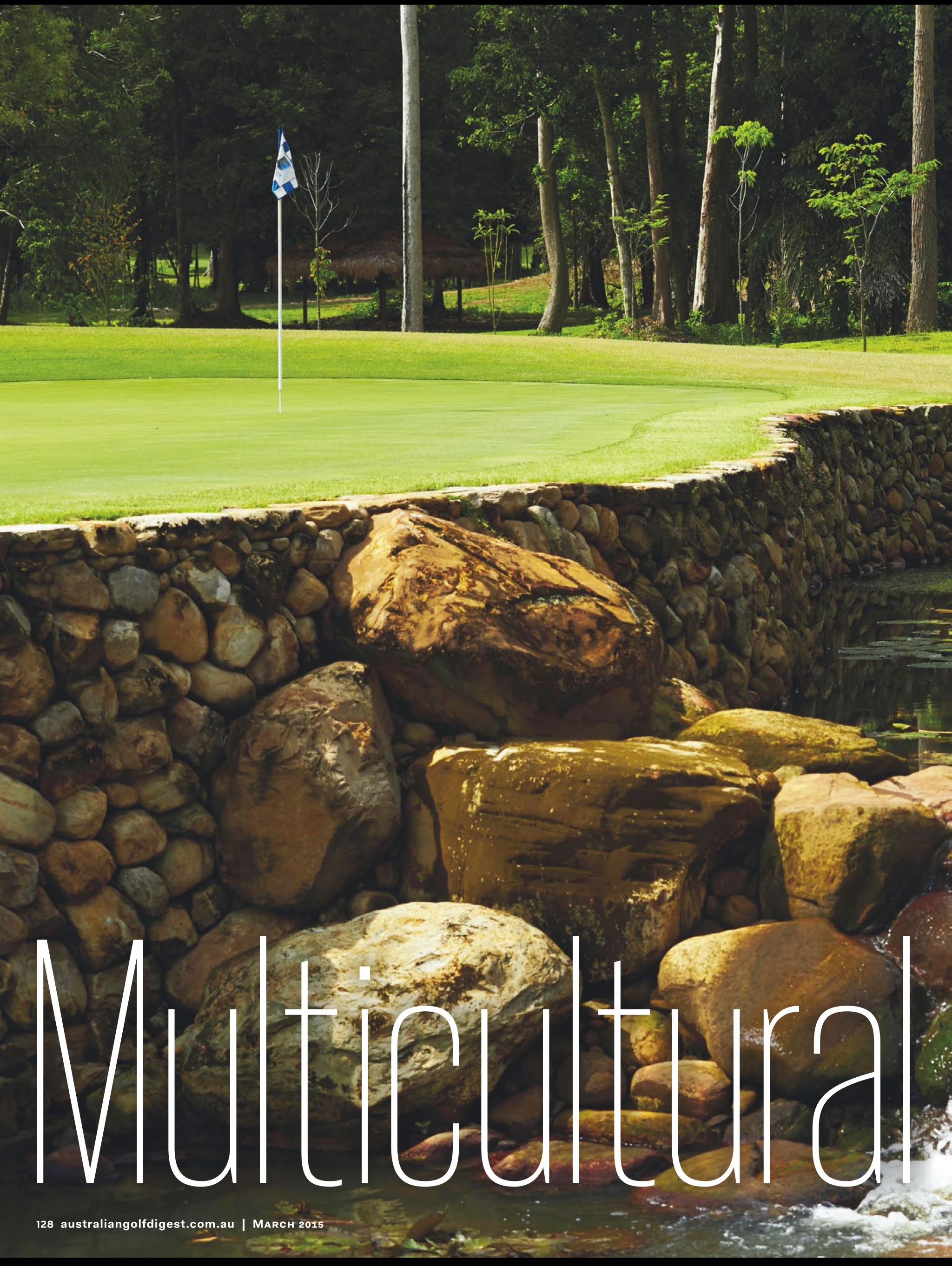
As many members live in the Magenta Shores development, there is a strong community feel to the club, as well as a strong working relationship between the Pullman Resort and the developer, Rich Sea International.

Membership at Magenta is restricted with most categories of membership closed from time to time. However, membership is transferrable and the club maintains a register of prospective members who are the first to be offered the opportunity to join.

If you would like to take up this unique opportunity, call today and get your name on the register.

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Multicultural

Melting Pot

A golf getaway to Malaysia has something for everyone. Here's why this region took out all the top gongs at the recent World Golf Awards.

By Evin Priest

WALKING up the pristine fairway of the par-4 16th hole at The Els Club [*above*], on the Malaysian island of Langkawi, I found something almost as rare as seeing my ball on the short grass. Macaque monkeys are everywhere on the courses of Malaysia – in the trees, on the fairways, around the greens and the cheekier ones will even search your golf bag for valuables. But this was a baby monkey and it was 10 metres from my ball, so I whipped out the iPhone to snap some pictures. As I got closer, however, the monkey tried to run away from my encroaching figure but dragging a broken leg slowed it down. Out came the mother monkey, scooping up her young before making a high-pitched 'back off' noise and scurrying off into the trees. After shaking my head in amazement at what I had just witnessed, I returned to the task of hitting an approach shot. But as I looked up to the green I was distracted once more. It was Mother Nature again, but this time she took on the form of the impossibly blue water of Datai Bay surrounding the course and crashing against the rocks just metres behind the green. Welcome to golf in Malaysia – it's wonderfully unique.

▸▸▸

WHEN a golfer chooses a holiday, certain destinations mean certain experiences. Great Britain and Ireland deliver a pilgrimage to the historic, windswept coastal links courses that cradled our game. A trip to the United States means travelling to picturesque, majestic golf sanctuaries all trying to outdo one another.

What Malaysia lacks in history and competition, it more than makes up for with four unique golf getaways spread across 200 courses in the true melting pot of Asia. With two thirds of Malaysia covered by rainforests, **jungle golf** is a popular form of the game where one can share the fairways with monkeys, eagles and exotic plants. For visually dramatic layouts, **highlands golf** offers the chance to play several thousand metres above

IMAGE SUPPLIED - OPPOSITE: NEWS CORP





THE CADDIE EXPERIENCE

Malaysians are big on caddies. While some golfers love the idea and others find it irritating, make sure you have at least 60 Malaysian Ringgit (MYR) on you for a tip – it's equal to $20 and the hard working bagmen (and women) thoroughly deserve it for their five hours of labour. It's an enjoyable novelty and one you'll take a few holes to become accustomed to – mainly, handing your ball to them after marking it on the green and trusting them with club selection.

sea level in cooler climates, while **beachside courses** await the golfer wanting to tee off alongside crystal clear water and white sandy beaches. And then there's **City golf,** perfect for the cosmopolitan golfer or businessman wanting to play on upmarket layouts within a stone's throw of shopping malls, five-star hotels and world-class restaurants.

THE RIGHT START

IF YOU can plan your trip for early November, a fantastic way to start your holiday and get inspired to play golf is to watch the world's best players in action at the CIMB Classic at Kuala Lumpur Golf and Country Club. Since 2013, the tournament has been co-sanctioned by the US PGA Tour, so you'll be watching golf's superstars vie for a ticket to the Masters and vital FedEx Cup points. I was lucky enough to see American Ryan Moore fend off compatriot Kevin Na and Spaniard Sergio Garcia to successfully defend his 2013 title. As an Australian, it's a luxury to be able to watch a PGA Tour event without having to travel to the States. "You know, I love it down here (in Malaysia)," Moore said after his win. "I enjoy the trip every single year, not just because I keep winning, but it would be nice if that kept happening." Yes Ryan, that would be nice.

KUALA LUMPUR: TRULY ASIA

IN 'KL' you'll find an excellent combination of the most enjoyable aspects of a golf trip within the convenience of a world city. The golf courses act as buffer zones, protecting the tourist from the hustle and bustle of the metropolis and offering peaceful golfing escapes. **Kuala Lumpur Golf and Country Club** (KLGCC) is a world-renowned layout located just 8km from the city centre and the championship West Course plays host to some of the world's best players for the CIMB Classic each year. The hilly and challenging 6397m, par-72 layout is ideal for the better player, while the East Course is a more social, wetlands-themed par-71 course of 6071m.

Saujana Golf and Country Club is regarded as one of Malaysia's best courses, with two inviting layouts (Palm and Bunga Raya) on offer. Situated 20km from KL, Saujana has hosted the Malaysian Open, Eisenhower Trophy and Espirito Santo Trophy and has previously been ranked as Malaysia's No.1 course by Golf Digest.

Out of the city and up into the mountains is **Templer Park Country Club** in Selangor, 22km from the CBD. The course is the brainchild of World Golf Hall of Famer Jumbo Ozaki, of Japan, and is a dramatic rainforest



Malaysia golf will take you from the mountains down to the sea, through the rainforest and the city. There's four different golf holidays spread over 200 courses.

course that winds around the foot of mountains. The front nine is considerably flat, while the back nine has some highly dramatic changes in elevation. Visible at every point of the course are Macaque monkeys and the popular Bukit Takun – a magnificent limestone hill emerging out of the mountains. One tip for Templer Park: Take one less club than you normally would for every shot. Ozaki certainly designed the course with distance deception in mind.

Away from the links, KL is a wonderful hub of southeast Asian culture. While Tourism Malaysia's famous slogan, "Malaysia: Truly Asia" is catchy, I had no idea of its true meaning until I visited KL. Touching down in this city feels as though you've travelled to Malaysia, China, India and Indonesia in one trip, but with the convenience of a place where everyone speaks reasonable English. It's fairly easy to get around, despite the occasional traffic jam and taxis are really, really cheap – especially when compared to say, Sydney. KL is heaven for foodies, catering to every taste from local Malay dishes to spicy Indian curries and traditional Chinese seafood, as well as traditional western food. My pick of the restaurants was Hakka Chinese restaurant, which served fresh, authentic Chinese dishes and a selection of mouth-watering seafood.

LANGKAWI: THE JEWEL OF KEDAH

NEARLY seven years ago, Sultan Abdul Halim, of Kedah (a state within Malaysia) changed the name of Langkawi to Langkawi Permata Kedah – *the Jewel of Kedah* – and this island paradise is indeed a treasure. It's an incredibly beautiful piece of paradise where the tourist is treated as royalty and the locals know how crucial the sector is to the local economy. You'll feel as though you don't have to lift a finger after getting off the plane.

After the hustle and bustle of KL, Langkawi is a welcome change of pace where you can let your hair down, play some golf and enjoy the island life. But don't think golf is all this island has to offer – when you're not teeing off on coastal gems like The Els Club Datai, the local cuisine at the night markets will have your mouth watering, while a hike to tranquil waterfalls or diving into an underwater marine park will ensure an action-packed schedule. Oh, and Langkawi is a duty-free island – meaning there are no taxes on alcohol. Anywhere.

Gunung Raya Golf Resort is the definition of fun golf. The layout was designed by American Max Wexler and named after the mountain it's nestled beneath. Gunung Raya, formerly a rubber plantation, is easier for guests and social players than other

IMAGE SUPPLIED • OPPOSITE: NEWS CORP

courses in Malaysia, with the blue and white tees both under 6000m. However, the back tees offer the Bubba Watsons of the world a 6377m challenge. With plenty of changes in elevation, the course requires you to plot your way around as hazards and fairway trees come into play from every tee.

▸ Kuala Lumpur Golf and Country Club [opposite] has the US PGA Tour's seal of approval, hosting the annual CIMB Classic. The Petronas Twin Towers [above] are the highlight of KL's city skyline. Langkawi has endless opportunities to unwind on the beach [*below*].

WELL PLAYED, ERNIE

A RESORT course's resort course. **The Els Club** in Datai, Langkawi is an incredibly enjoyable golfing experience and was recently voted the 'World's Best New Golf Course' and 'Best New Golf Course in Asia' at the World Golf Awards in Portugal. At first I was taken aback by the breathtaking vista of the course meandering through the rainforest and jutting out to



WHERE TO STAY

The Majestic,
5 Jalan Sultan Hishamuddin, KL City Centre Malaysia

The Majestic Hotel is the perfect place to stay while you're in Kuala Lumpur, and the 5-star hotel's inclusion in the prestigious Leading Hotels of the World luxury collection means you're getting a standard of service enjoyed by patrons of The Ritz in London or The Pierre in New York. One of my favourite things about the Majestic was being greeted by friendly staff wearing traditional colonial white uniforms with pith helmets on arrival, all of whom spoke fluent English. The staff also have a solid understanding of golf tours, so they're on top of taking your clubs from the tour coach back and forth to your room. The Majestic is in an excellent location, just 2 kilometres from KL Sentral station and 5km from Kuala Lumpur City Central (KLCC), which includes the enormous Suria KLCC shopping mall, a restaurant district and the world-famous Petronas Twin Towers, plus a host of trendy bars. While you're staying at the Majestic, be sure to check out the Orchid Conservatory (especially if you need a venue for a board meeting), have a swim in the rooftop pool or a relaxing drink and game of snooker in the exclusive Smoke House.

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An aerial view of The Els Club highlights the secluded location of the course.

Templer Park Country Club, home to the popular Bukit Takun – a magnificent limestone hill emerging out of the mountains.

IMAGES SUPPLIED

"The Els Club Datai is such a scenic property that it's impossible not to be blown away by the landscape." - Ernie Els

the sea for views few courses in the world could offer. The Els Club also boasts an interesting design philosophy of the Big Easy – no bunkers. That's right, not one sand trap on the course.

Els believed the topography of the land, the proximity to the sea and the streams that dissect several holes were challenging enough without adding bunkering to its trouble, and several holes justify his mantra. Notably the par-3 17th hole, which is relatively short at 146m but the Andaman Sea awaits any shot drifting right, especially those that land on the right side of the green and roll towards the 15cm of fringe offered before the shore. You can literally hear the water smashing against the green complex as you putt.

The resort has an incredibly exclusive feel of luxury, too. The plush locker rooms give the golfer the feeling of a tour pro gearing up for a round, particularly when you look at the glass-enclosed locker of Els with his signature splashed across a tour bag.

Lunch or dinner (and beer) at the restaurant after your round is essential; you don't want to miss out on enjoying a meal while looking down the course towards the sea as eagles soar gracefully around the trees near the clubhouse. A classy gift from the club to the media on our trip was an Els Club golf bag medallion, each personally engraved with our names. Exactly one week after returning from my trip, Malaysia was voted 'Asia's Best Golf Destination' at the World Golf Awards. The top gong came as no surprise as I can't imagine a more valuable golf trip; for a fraction of the cost of other international golf destinations, Malaysia offers world-class golf courses, luxurious hotels, a variety of Asian cultures and experiences in one country, in addition to extraordinary recreational tourist activities.

Whether you're single, married, have a family or a list of clients to entertain, head to Malaysia before the rest of the world discovers the hype this proud golfing nation deserves.

WHERE TO STAY

The Danna,
Telaga Harbour Park
Pantai Kok

The beachfront infinite pool at The Danna is enough on its own to make this 5-star resort a must for your Langkawi stopover. Sip on a refreshing cocktail or order some delicious food from the Pool Cafe and have it brought to your poolside chair while you look out over the beach and the surrounding islands. Located on Telaga Harbour and only 11km from the airport, the Danna features British-Malaysian inspired colonial architecture, as well as enjoyable 'High English' activities such as cocktails in The Verandah lounge or afternoon tea in the Straits & Co.

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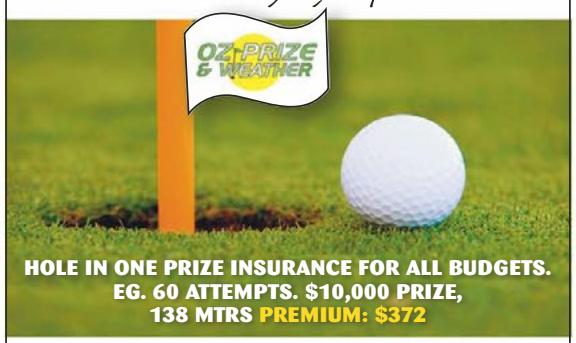
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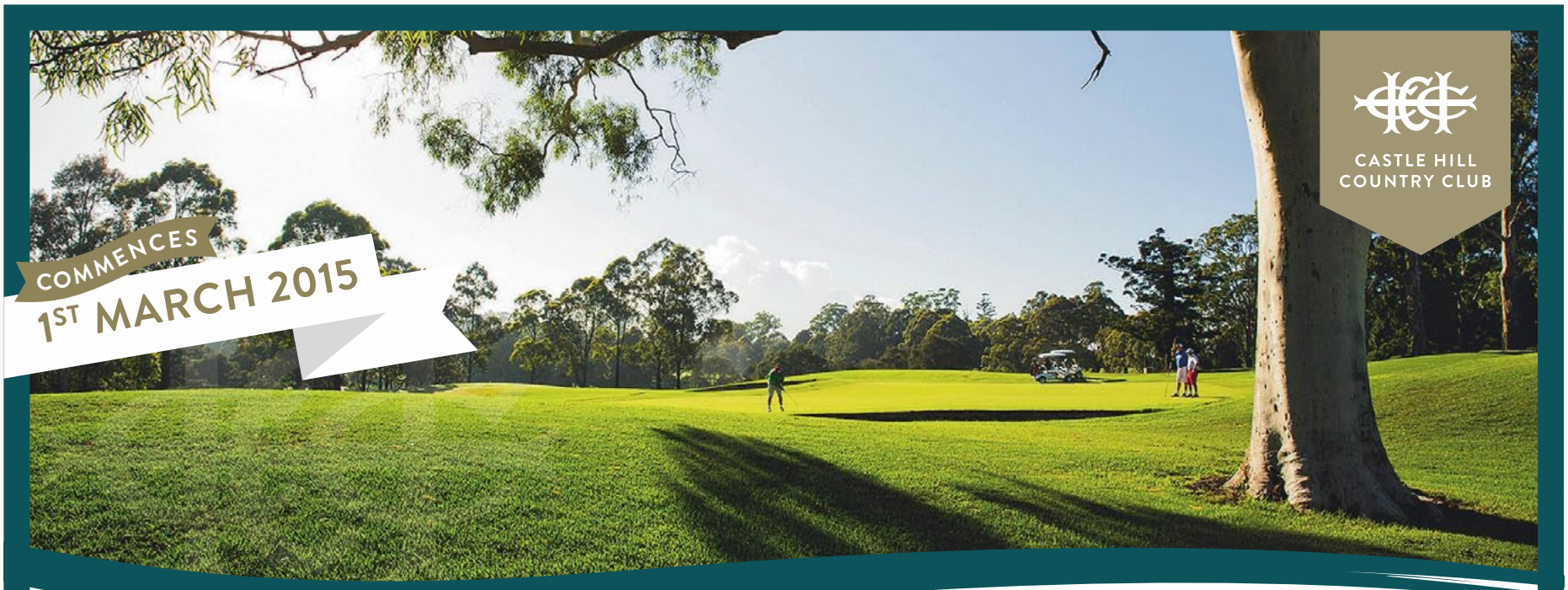
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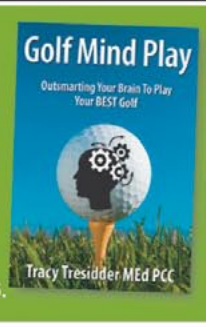
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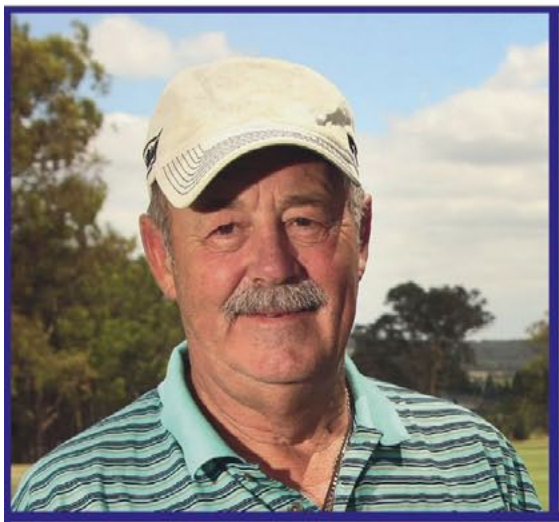
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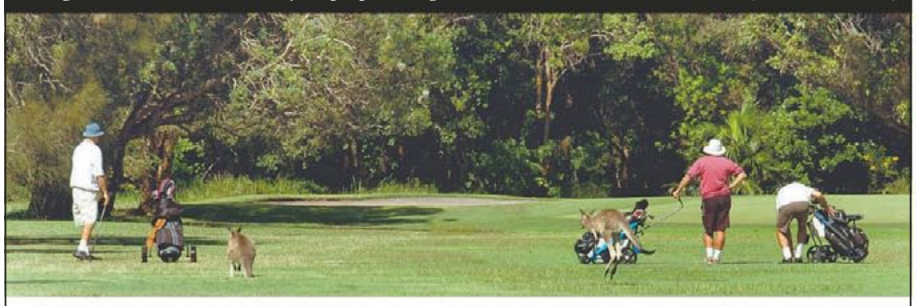
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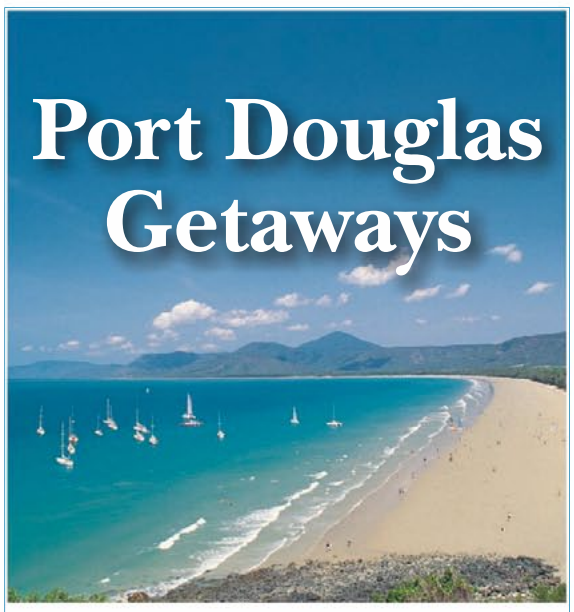
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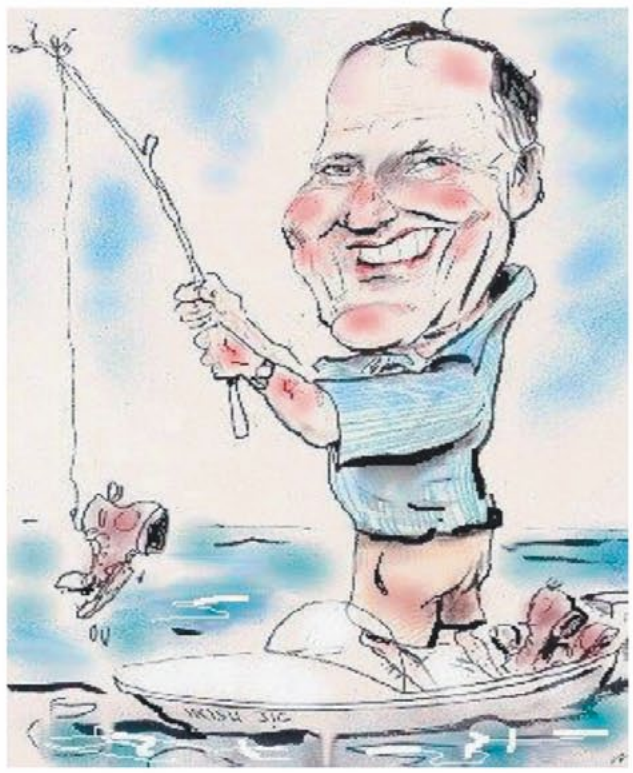
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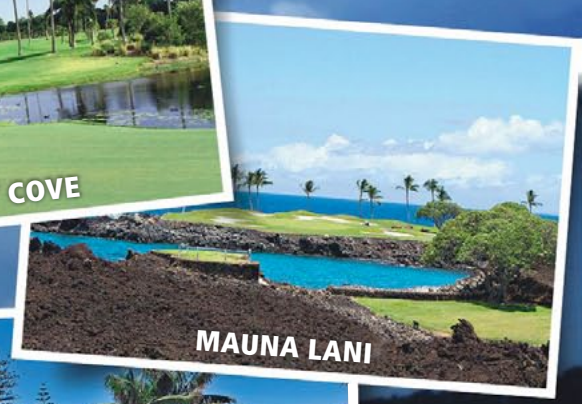
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▶February

FEBRUARY 19

EUROPEAN TOUR: Indian Open - Round 1, 4.30pm LIVE

FEBRUARY 20

US PGA TOUR: Northern Trust Open – Round 1, 9.00am LIVE

EUROPEAN TOUR: Indian Open - Round 2, 4.30pm LIVE

FEBRUARY 21

US PGA TOUR: Northern Trust Open – Round 2, 9.00am LIVE

EUROPEAN TOUR: Indian Open - Round 3, 6.00pm LIVE

FEBRUARY 22

US PGA TOUR: Northern Trust Open – Round 3, 5.00am LIVE

EUROPEAN TOUR: Indian Open – Final Round, 5.30pm LIVE

FEBRUARY 23

US PGA TOUR: Northern Trust Open – Final Round, 5.00am LIVE

FEBRUARY 24

The Golf Show, 8.30 pm (FOX SPORTS)

FEBRUARY 26

EUROPEAN TOUR: Joburg Open - Round 1, 7.30pm LIVE

FEBRUARY 27

US PGA TOUR: Honda Classic – Round 1, 6.00am LIVE

EUROPEAN TOUR: Joburg Open - Round 2, 7.30pm LIVE

FEBRUARY 28

US PGA TOUR: Honda Classic – Round 2, 6.00am LIVE

EUROPEAN TOUR: Joburg Open - Round 3, 10.00pm LIVE

▶March

MARCH 1

US PGA TOUR: Honda Classic – Round 3, 5.00am LIVE

EUROPEAN TOUR: Joburg Open – Final Round, 9.00pm LIVE

MARCH 2

US PGA TOUR: Honda Classic – Final Round, 5.00am LIVE

MARCH 3

The Golf Show, 8.30pm (FOX SPORTS)

MARCH 5

Women's HSBC Champions – Round 1, 2.30pm LIVE

EUROPEAN TOUR: Africa Open – Round 1, 7.30pm LIVE

MARCH 6

WORLD GOLF CHAMPIONSHIP: Cadillac Championship – Round 1, 6.00am LIVE

US PGA TOUR: Puerto Rico Open – Round 1, 10.00am DELAY

Women's HSBC Champions – Round 2, 2.30pm LIVE

EUROPEAN TOUR: Africa Open – Round 2, 7.30pm LIVE

MARCH 7

WORLD GOLF CHAMPIONSHIP: Cadillac Championship – Round 2, 6.00am LIVE

US PGA TOUR: Puerto Rico Open – Round 2, 10.00am DELAY

Women's HSBC Champions – Round 3, 2.30pm LIVE

EUROPEAN TOUR: Africa Open – Round 3, 9.30pm LIVE

MARCH 8

WORLD GOLF CHAMPIONSHIP: Cadillac Championship – Round 3, 4.00am LIVE

US PGA TOUR: Puerto Rico Open – Round 3, 10.00am DELAY

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Women's HSBC Champions – Final Round, 2.30pm LIVE

EUROPEAN TOUR: Africa Open – Final Round, 9.00pm LIVE

MARCH 9

WORLD GOLF CHAMPIONSHIP: Cadillac Championship – Final Round, 5.00am LIVE

US PGA TOUR: Puerto Rico Open – Final Round, 11.00am DELAY

MARCH 10

The Golf Show, 8.30pm

MARCH 12

EUROPEAN TOUR: Tshwane Open – Round 1, 7.30pm LIVE

MARCH 13

US PGA TOUR: VALSPAR Championship – Round 1, 7.00am LIVE

EUROPEAN TOUR: Tshwane Open – Round 2, 7.30pm LIVE

MARCH 14

US PGA TOUR: VALSPAR Championship – Round 2, 7.00am LIVE

EUROPEAN TOUR: Tshwane Open – Round 3, 9.30pm LIVE

MARCH 15

PGA TOUR: VALSPAR Championship – Round 3, 5.00am LIVE

EUROPEAN TOUR: Tshwane Open – Final Round, 9.00pm LIVE

MARCH 16

PGA TOUR: VALSPAR Championship – Final Round, 5.00am LIVE

MARCH 17

The Golf Show, 8.30pm

MARCH 20

US PGA TOUR: Arnold Palmer Invitational - Round 1, 7.00am LIVE

LPGA TOUR: Founders Cup – Round 1, 10.30am LIVE

MARCH 21

US PGA TOUR: Arnold Palmer Invitational - Round 2, 7.00am LIVE

LPGA TOUR: Founders Cup – Round 2, 10.30am LIVE

MARCH 22

US PGA TOUR: Arnold Palmer Invitational - Round 3, 5.00am LIVE

LPGA TOUR: Founders Cup – Round 3, 10.30am LIVE

MARCH 23

US PGA TOUR: Arnold Palmer Invitational – Final Round, 4.30am LIVE

LPGA TOUR: Founders Cup – Final Round, 11.00am LIVE

MARCH 24

The Golf Show, 8.30pm

MARCH 26

EUROPEAN TOUR: Trophee Hassan – Round 1, 10.00pm LIVE

MARCH 27

US PGA TOUR: Texas Open - Round 1, 7.00am LIVE

LPGA TOUR: KIA Classic – Round 1, 10.30am LIVE

EUROPEAN TOUR: Trophee Hassan – Round 2, 10.00pm LIVE

MARCH 28

US PGA TOUR: Texas Open - Round 1, 7.00am LIVE

LPGA TOUR: KIA Classic – Round 1, 10.30am LIVE

EUROPEAN TOUR: Trophee Hassan – Round 3, 11.55pm LIVE

MARCH 29

US PGA TOUR: Texas Open - Round 3, 5.00am LIVE

LPGA TOUR: KIA Classic – Round 3, 11.00am LIVE

EUROPEAN TOUR: Trophee Hassan – Final Round, 10.30pm LIVE

MARCH 30

US PGA TOUR: Texas Open – Final Round, 5.00am LIVE

LPGA TOUR: KIA Classic – Final Round, 11.00am LIVE

MARCH 31

The Golf Show, 8.30pm



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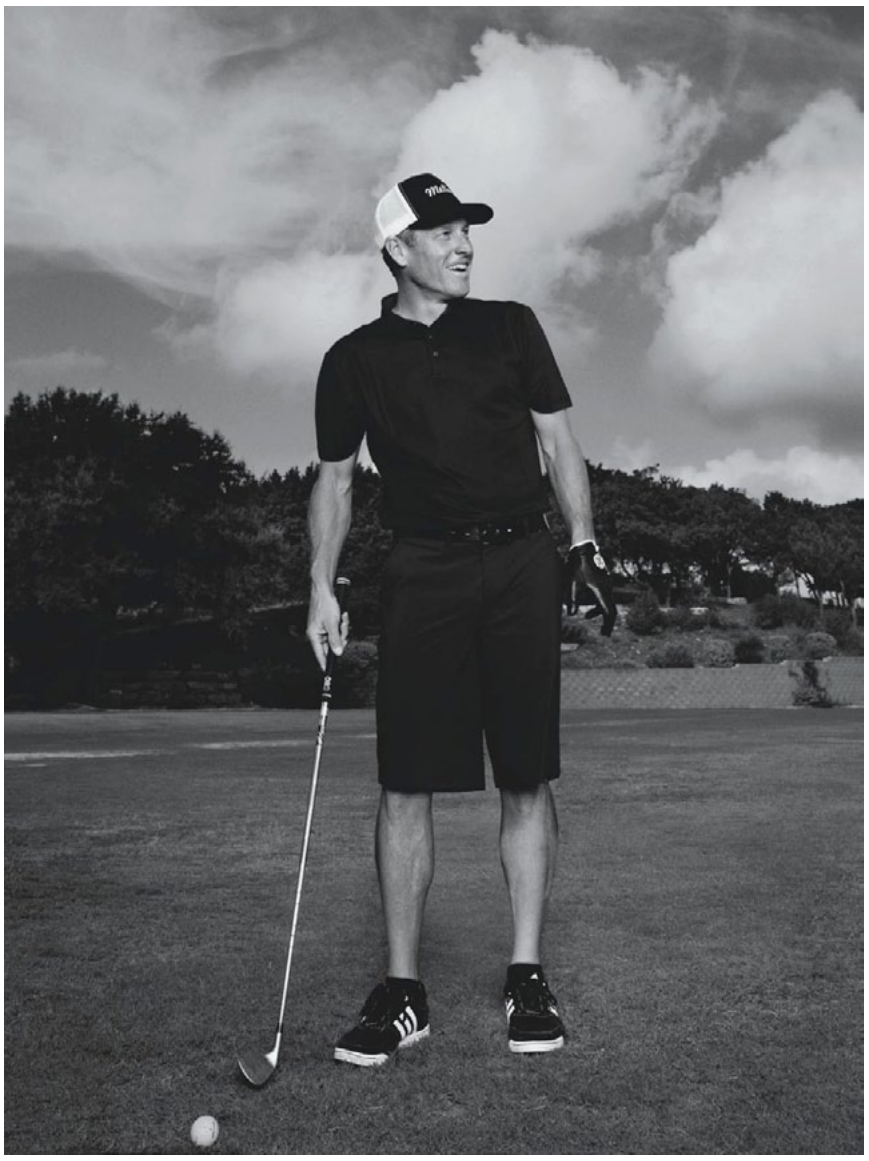
LANCE ARMSTRONG

ON PLAYING 250 ROUNDS A YEAR, CHOKING ON THE FIRST TEE, AND COMPARING THE WILD WEST OF CYCLING VERSUS GOLF'S CODE OF HONOUR.

WITH GUY YOCOM


NG
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WALTER IOOSS JR.
10 . 09 . 14
BARTON CREEK COUNTRY CLUB
AWAY

GOOD GOLFERS shut out distractions and stay in the moment. Mentally, I can't do those things. I'm checking my phone not just between shots but between practice swings. My teacher, Chuck Cook, says he hasn't seen Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) as bad as mine since he worked with Payne Stewart. That would be a compliment, except I don't play like Payne Stewart. When I have a shot that matters – say, one for $500 in one of the regular games I play in – I almost shut down. It's not an easy game for me.



LAST YEAR I played 250 rounds. I'll get there again this year. When I'm at my other home, in Aspen, I'm with a group of about 20 old curmudgeons and burnouts – classic Aspen guys. Here in Texas, I play with the same three or four guys at Barton Creek, Austin Country Club, The University of Texas Golf Club and a few other places. The Austin guys love action. It gets out of hand. Once you get used to playing for big money, a $10 nassau seems boring, and playing for nothing seems pointless. Whatever you're playing for, it's got to be enough that it hurts a little when you lose.

MY HANDICAP IS 10, and it's taken me serious effort to get there. I have issues. I have terrible flexibility. My hand-eye coordination stinks. My range of motion in my upper and lower body is awful. I can cycle, run or swim for as long and far as you want me to go, but those are straight-ahead sports. When you start asking me to rotate, move side to side or incorporate complicated movements, I'm done. I'm less talented at golf than the guy next door.

NANEA GOLF CLUB. Great course, the Big Island of Hawaii, January 2, 2014. I rush to the first tee late, no warm-up. Just trying to make contact, I start playing out of my mind. The guys are talking smack. "The meltdown is imminent," that kind of stuff. After 10 holes, I'm even par, and they get quiet, like when a baseball pitcher has a no-hitter going. I end up shooting 74, which is a little unreal because Nanea is a tough par 73. I'd never broken 80 before. The next day I sit around plotting the adjustments I need to make to break 70 at Kukio the following day. I shoot 98. Driving home, I'm saying out loud, over and over, "I hate this effing game!"

I HAVEN'T BROKEN 80 SINCE. That day at Nanea, I was in the zone. I'd felt it before in cycling, many times. That effortless power, the sense you can do nothing wrong. For six or seven years, I got on the bike knowing I was going to win. It was only a matter of going out and implementing the strategy. But then it got hard. When I tried to come back in 2004, I was swimming upstream. I couldn't find the zone again. And just like in golf, when you fall out of the zone, it's impossible to get back in it.

TALKING SMACK is part of the game, isn't it? When a guy I have a bet with smokes one down the middle and has a perfect angle into the green, then hits his approach into a bunker, I'll sidle up close to him and say, "That was a great drive." What can be more annoying?

WHEN YOU LOSE A MINUTE in a stage at the Tour de France, you've got to find a way to get that minute back. It's like losing shots in golf: You've got to find a way to follow the bogey with a birdie. In cycling, I knew what I had to do to get that minute back. I didn't always do it, but I'm a pro, and at least I knew how. In golf, when I make a double-bogey, it feels like shots lost forever. Following up with a birdie is the hardest thing in the world.

GOLFERS CHOKE for different reasons. Some people choke for money. Some choke when they're going for their personal best, others when they have to put up a number. My choking point is the first-hole tee shot with people watching. I can handle small events, but at a real tournament where there's no place to hide, that must be terrifying. How do the pros do it with all those eyes on them? I haven't experienced that kind of pressure yet, though there were a few people watching when I played in the member-guest at LA Country Club this year. There were just enough people there to make me know it'd be tough if I get on a stage like the AT&T Pro-Am.

I LOVE THE SCENE at LA North. Long pants, no mobile phones, walking. It's pure golf, but if you could choose one vision of golf for the future, I don't think that super-conservative version is the answer any more than 40-centimetre holes are on the other side of the equation. It's somewhere in the middle. In my version of golf heaven, shoes are required, but not collared shirts. Shirttails don't need to be tucked in, either. And there would be music.

THE MUSIC THING IS TRICKY. The trouble is, not everyone in a foursome loves the same thing, and there's a special place in hell for music bullies who think their stuff is cooler than everyone else's. The best thing to do is take a poll among your foursome, but if it's left up to you, try Van Morrison Radio on the Pandora app. It's an incredible stream of music that 90 per cent of people love. Smooth tunes from Otis Redding, James Taylor, Paul Simon, Jackson Browne, Ray Charles, Bob Marley and, of course, Van Morrison. Play it low but audible except near greens and tees, where you mute it. And if anybody hints they don't care for music, shut it off completely.

THERE'S CHOKING in everything. Cycling wouldn't seem like a sport where people would swallow the apple, because like I said, it's a straight-ahead sport. But when a

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guy doesn't eat the right thing at the right time (cyclists have to eat while they ride) that's choking. Not drinking correctly on a warm day or making a small tactical mistake or anything in any walk of life where you lose focus – to me, that's choking.

▸▸▸

SO MANY BIKE RACES, there were easy routes. In golf, there's no such thing as an easy course, at least for me. Par 3s are especially brutal; it's where I make most of my double-bogeys. I've never understood why they're the highest-handicap holes on the scorecard. The fourth hole at Roaring Fork Club, a great course near Aspen, has a par 3 longer than 180 metres that is the No.5 handicap hole. When I play with real good players and come to that hole, it's always a relief to get a shot, because I need it.

▸▸▸

TOUGHEST SHOT IN GOLF FOR ME: anything around the green from a tight lie where I'm forced to use my wedge. I'll decel. I'll chunk it, blade it or hit it too low so it can't hold the green. I can be a few metres off the green in two and wind up making triple-bogey. It's that bad.

▸▸▸

I DON'T PRACTISE. I hate hitting balls. It drives Chuck Cook crazy, but like I told him, practice is like riding a stationary bike, which I hate. When it's 75 degrees outside, no wind and the sun is shining, I'm going to get out on the road. And I do still ride my bike. Isn't doing the real thing always better?

▸▸▸

NOBODY LOOKS BETTER than 26-year-old Rickie Fowler. Nobody looks worse than a 45-year-old guy who dresses like Rickie Fowler. If you've got grey hair and a burger belly, leave the flat-brim hat and skin-hugging shirts to Rickie.

▸▸▸

I MET TIGER WOODS at the ESPYs a long time ago, got to know him over the years. What interests me about Tiger is how he sort of screwed himself – not by his personal troubles but because of how insanely good he was. He created the template that every great player has copied for the past 15 years. He showed Rory McIlroy, Adam Scott and so many others exactly how to train, how to be focused and dedicated. If Tiger hadn't raised the bar so high when he was in his prime, the back side of his career might have been easier. I'd love to see him get back to where he was, but I wonder if that would be good enough for him to steamroll golf tournaments like he used to.

▸▸▸

DID THE PUNISHMENT for what Tiger did exceed the crime? As someone with some experience along those lines, I'd say it did. What happened was, the media changed. Somewhere between the end of Michael Jordan's career in 2003 and Tiger's scandal in 2009, the media stopped being compliant to athletes and celebrities. They no longer protected them, because they no longer needed them. In the digital world, all that matters is the scoop. The mainstream media is right there with the TMZs and Deadspins, because they can't afford to be beaten. The upshot is that there are no more sacred cows out there, and a lot more harshness. If John Kennedy and Frank Sinatra were alive and conducting their lives the way they did in their primes, they'd be devoured.

▸▸▸

NEXT MONTH I'm playing Augusta National for the first time. I've been invited by the former president of Nike, Charlie Denson. Lanny Wadkins is coming, too. Charlie said, "You want to join me at Augusta?" and I answered, "Is the Pope Catholic?" Pine Valley this month, Augusta National next month. How am I doing?

'PINE VALLEY THIS MONTH, AUGUSTA NATIONAL NEXT MONTH. HOW AM I GOING?'

▸▸▸

ON THE OTHER HAND, I'm the one guy in a million who has no special desire to see the Masters in person. Watching on TV, yes; spectating at the tournament, no. I'm more a doer than a watcher.

▸▸▸

GOLF HAS its hallowed grounds. Augusta National, Pine Valley, LACC, Riviera, Olympic, Ballyneal and Nanea are almost like holy places, and I've been blessed not to have just seen them, but played them. Cycling has its hallowed grounds, too. Mont Ventoux, Alpe d'Huez, Col du Tourmalet and Luz Ardiden are like monuments. But at this stage in my life I'd much rather be teeing it up at Augusta National than riding Mont Ventoux.

▸▸▸

I'LL REFER to the British Open on Twitter [3.85 million followers @lancearmstrong], and immediately I'm lit up by a million Brits telling me that it's just "The Open." Man, are they uptight about that.

▸▸▸

THE ELEMENTS don't faze me. I'll play in anything. In Aspen last Thanksgiving, it was snowing. But I'm itching to play. I check the weather app and see that in Grand Junction, just a 2½-hour drive away, it's cold but there's no snow. I talk a few mates into driving down there with me to play. Bad call. We get down there, and it's snowing. It was a nice drive down, but the drive back was tough. My friends hassled me the whole way.

▸▸▸

GOLF IS DIFFERENT from the culture of cycling when I was competing, and that's putting it mildly. Cycling, it was the Wild West. Nobody considered doping cheating. It was an arms race where absolutely anything went, and it was every man for himself. You might consider me the last guy to have anything to say about cheating, but golf is different. I love adhering to a code of honour that cycling didn't have. If I moved my ball in the rough and got caught, I wouldn't just regret it, I'd be heartbroken forever. When I think about reform in cycling, I think about golf.

▸▸▸

IF A PRO GOLFER WERE DOPING, I doubt I'd be able to tell just by looking. Anabolic steroids – the stuff that builds muscle size, speed and strength – were not in our world. The substances we used weren't for building muscle size, they were to increase endurance and recovery. So I honestly don't know.

▸▸▸

THE UPSHOT OF SURVIVING cancer is that the Livestrong Foundation, which I'm no longer part of, raised $500 million. The corporations behind it and the individuals who donated obviously were huge in making it go, but I'm proud to no end of what I started. It's remarkable that one guy in a non-mainstream sport like cycling was able to inspire people and create that level of awareness. Never underestimate the power of one person. The US PGA Tour has raised in the neighbourhood of $2 billion for charity in its history. It's an awesome thing, but one way it could do more is to put the power of its superstars to work better. Tiger and other players have their own fantastic causes, but if the tour got them to focus their influence on charities the US PGA Tour already has by putting their names behind them, they'd raise even more money.

▸▸▸

CHRIS FROOME, the British cyclist who won the Tour de France in 2013, does everything wrong. He's got a choppy pedal stroke. His arms are sticking out, his head is down, and he's all over the bike. He's the Jim Furyk of cycling, unconventional in every way. Except that it works. And the reason it works is superior cadence. His tempo is amazing. It's paced in a way that gives his unusual mechanics time to fall together. The golf swing can be the same way.

▸▸▸

WHEN MY HEAD hits the pillow tonight, my last thought is, *Will tomorrow be the day I finally break 80 again?* I have a 12.30pm tee time at Austin Country Club tomorrow. It just might be the day.

▸▸▸

THE LAST THREE HOLES are what matter. If you finish strong, it will heal almost any bet, save nearly any round, make you leave the course with a smile. Take pride in how you get to the finish line. Let your ego come out. Remember, stars close the show.

4 PINSAN



TO THE LEFT PIN

▸Being able to hit a shot that curves to the left is useful in a lot of situations. When the pin is tucked on the left, it lets you aim for a bigger, safer target – the centre of the green – and work the ball towards the flag. To play that draw, you want to make a swing that goes out to the right through impact. A position like this one at the top – with the club pointing basically at the target and the left wrist slightly cupped, or bent back – promotes that swing-to-the-right move. If you fight the classic good-player mistake, a hook, make sure you're not being too aggressive when you aim. If the flag is tight to the left edge, you don't want to overcook one and end up missing on the short side of the green. Aim so that a nice draw will still end up a few steps right of the hole.

At the top, the club is pointing roughly at the target.

The left wrist is slightly cupped (bent back at the crease on top).

Feel like you're swinging right of the target through impact.

ITY

HOW TO GET TO A PIN ON THE LEFT OR THE RIGHT

BY HANK HANEY



At the top, the club is "laid off," or pointing left of the target.

The left wrist is flat or slightly bowed (bent outwards).

Feel like you're swinging left of the target through impact.

+

ADIDAS shirt, pants, belt, shoes
TAYLORMADE hat

TO THE RIGHT PIN

▸More players naturally hit a fade than a draw, so you'd think a right flag would be a juicy target, especially in a left-to-right wind or with the ball below your feet. But a lot of golfers make the combined mistake of not using enough club and taking dead aim at the flag. Those shots end up short and right of the green. Unless the flag is right up front, pick the club that plays to the yardage for the back edge. To hit a shot with authority and a little fade, you want to get into a position at the top like the one here: the club pointed to the left of the target and the left wrist flatter. That will produce the opposite of the draw swing. It promotes a path to the left through impact, and that's how you fade it. Remember this rule: The more you fade (or slice) the ball, the less overall distance you'll cover.

—WITH MATTHEW RUDY

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Closeout



▶ Adam Scott swapped his golf clubs for a surfboard on a recent holiday with friends.

Having a Swell Time

Nine days, countless waves and hardly any golf. Holidaying, Adam Scott-style

THE sunburns were epic. Forget red skin, we're talking purple. Pro golfers Adam Scott, Nick Flanagan and Will MacKenzie went to Nicaragua late last year with the intent of surfing the big waves at Playa Colorado for as long as they could, even if they had to pay for it later.

"After lunch one day, I couldn't surf anymore. I had to go lie down," says Aussie Flanagan, who plays on the Web.com Tour. "I think I got heatstroke. But it was so worth it."

"Stoked!" That's how surfing photographer Dave (Nelly) Nelson described the golfers over the nine-day trip – especially Scott, who, as the No.3-ranked golfer in the world, doesn't get a lot of chances to simply eat, sleep and surf. This holiday at Mark and Dave's Nicaragua, a surf camp on the Pacific Ocean about two hours south of the country's capital, Managua, was exactly what they were looking for. And when you read "camp," don't think the guys were sleeping on the beach in tents. The accommodations and food were Four Seasons-esque.

Joining the golfers on the trip were pro surfer Bud Freitas and a handful of others from the golf and surfing worlds. That made for an interesting dynamic, Flanagan says. Near the camp were a couple of golf courses, including the oceanside Guacalito Golf Course, designed by architect David McLay Kidd, whose CV includes Bandon Dunes and Gamble Sands. Says Flanagan: "All the surfers wanted to do was play golf, and all the golfers wanted to do was surf."

Scott didn't bring his sticks, but he did get talked into a chipping contest against Freitas on the beach, which is documented on Mark and Dave's Facebook page. "Bud chipped in from 40 feet away to win it," Nelson says.

Back in the water, the real contest seemed to be who could survive the trip without sustaining a significant injury. All three tour pros are decent surfers, Flanagan says, but there were times when they were on the brink of being overmatched by the 10-to-12-foot waves. Nelson was in the water to photograph their rides and cringed from time to time. "One of the breaks was right in front of some rocks," he said. "Sometimes we were holding our breath when Adam or Will paddled out there. There were a couple of really close calls."

> "Sometimes we were holding our breath when Adam or Will paddled out there."

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VCMulti

sureshotgps

the little voice **with BIG experience**



Small, light and can be worn in a multitude of ways



See & hear GPS distances to the front, centre & back of the green



Measure longest drive



Wear as a regular watch in time mode

Let the Sureshotgps VCMulti show and tell you the most accurate distances so you can play your best golf game. Wear it in a multitude of ways including on your wrist [band included], hat, bag or belt. Now you can hear and see the best, most accurate advice for your game with the new Sureshotgps VCMulti.

Now available from your Golf Professional or favourite golf retailer.

sureshotgps.com





HOT LIST

PART I: DRIVERS, FAIRWAYS & HYBRIDS

Our annual review of the best clubs in the game

BY MIKE STACHURA

YOU know why there are 111 products on this year's Hot List? It's an insanely high number, the most on the Hot List since we went to nine categories in 2010. ▸ The truth is, there's just that much good stuff on the market now. Sure, equipment sales have been trending down. And industry research firm Golf Datatech suggests consumer enthusiasm for buying new clubs is flat at best. It almost seems as if golfers believe all the innovation that's ever going to happen in the game has already happened. ▸ Not even close. ▸ Innovation in golf continues to intrigue us, and we should know. We've seen just about everything that's out there, and we've never been more impressed. The goal of the Hot List is to review the panoply of new products that we think will make

This year's club testing took place at The Wigwam Resort in America.

a difference in your game, clubs that show us possibilities that hadn't existed. We've spent three months consulting scientists, industry insiders and players of all abilities to arrive at the game's most meaningful clubs. That includes two weeks at The Wigwam resort in Litchfield Park, Arizona, site of our annual Hot List Summit. In all, we reviewed 307 clubs to find the 111 that matter most.

Innovation might be less outlandish than it used to be – square drivers, anyone? – but that's the point. Exceptional improvements today begin with an attention to an aesthetic that appears almost classic. Club designers are no longer pursuing theoretically beneficial materials, manufacturing techniques or constructions without being sure they first do no harm to the club's sound or feel.

Golf's innovators are demonstrating a supreme unwillingness to accept what seems to be obvious. Because what seems to be obvious blinds us to what might be possible.

THE PARADIGM OF THE POSSIBLE

DESIGNERS are tapping into new concepts and even new kinds of research to make today's clubs better. The Hot List products reveal an unrelenting passion for innovation, from the obvious (movable weights) to the obscure (progressive sole width on your irons). Why? Because you can't make things better by doing them the same way they've always been done. For example, it's why wind-tunnel testing is almost a prerequisite in designing today's drivers. The incremental results are drivers that make your same old swing brand-new fast. It's also why the bottom of the clubface is getting as hot as the centre. All those channels, slots and accordion-like features in the sole result in springier faces in the place where many of us make contact.

It's why iron faces are starting to flex like drivers. No one ever thought that would be possible, until companies decided to see just how thin they could make a sheet of steel. The result is iron faces that behave at impact no different than drivers. It's why wedge grooves are the largest and sharpest they've been since the rules rolled back their size. Engineers now calculate, to the individual groove, how long until a milling tool stops cutting the perfect edge. And it's why we already have solutions to the ban on anchored putters a year before the rule takes effect. Counterbalanced, anyone?

All this innovation is reason enough for you to examine your gear. Get with a qualified clubfitter, and study our report. You don't need all 111, but we'll guarantee you this: The one you need is on this list. On the following pages you'll find the best new **Drivers, Fairways** and **Hybrids** to get you started...

CRITERIA

OUR three judges, listed on the opposite page, cast the only votes in the Hot List selection, but we gather insight from three independent panels. The Scientists advise us on Innovation. Retailers assess Demand. Players evaluate Performance and Look/Sound/Feel. Our US-based judges evaluated Hot List candidates in four areas.

PERFORMANCE (45%) The utility of a product, or what happens to the ball when it's struck by the club.

INNOVATION (30%) How a club's technology, including custom-fitting, advances the category.

LOOK/SOUND/FEEL (20%) What the golfer experiences before, during and after impact.

DEMAND (5%) The relative interest in a product and its reputation.



All judging is based on a 100-point scale.

GOLD
Products earned a score of 93 to 100.

SILVER
Products earned a score of 88 to 92.99.

97-100 ..... ★★★★★
88-96 ..... ★★★★
70-87 ..... ★★★
51-69 ..... ★★
≤50 ..... ★

SCIENTISTS



JOHN AXE, PH.D.
Retired physicist in solid materials science, Brookhaven National Laboratory



MARTIN BROUILLETTE, PH.D.
Professor of mechanical engineering at the University of Sherbrooke in Quebec



THOMAS LACY JR., PH.D.
Professor of aerospace engineering at Mississippi State



DAVID LEE, PH.D.
Professor of physics, Gordon College



TOM MASE, PH.D.
Professor of mechanical engineering, Cal Poly-San Luis Obispo



JOHN MCPHEE, PH.D.
Professor of systems design engineering at University of Waterloo in Ontario



DICK RUGGE
Former senior technical director for the USGA



GEORGE SPRINGER, PH.D.
Professor of aeronautics and astronautics at Stanford

RETAILERS



LEIGH BADER
President, 3Balls.com, West Bridgewater



BUDDY CHRISTENSEN
Owner, Golfdom, Tysons Corner



SVEN KESSLER
Former vice president of retail operations for Edwin Watts Golf



MARK PETRUCCI
Manager, Joe & Leigh's Discount Golf Pro Shop



SUSAN ROLL
Owner of Carlsbad Golf Centre, Carlsbad, California



CRAIG ZIMMERMAN
General manager, RedTail Golf Centre, Beaverton, Oregon

HOT LIST CO-ORDINATOR



KEELY LEVINS
Golf Digest Assistant Editor

We reviewed 307 clubs to find the 111 that matter most.

▸ PLAYERS



JASON GUSS
Director, Jason Guss Golf Academy, Bath Township and South Lyon, Michigan



ERIKA LARKIN
Owner, Larkin Golf Learning Community at Virginia Oaks Golf Club, Gainesville



GARY ABBOTT
AGE 27 HANDICAP 10
Kitchener, Ontario



THOMAS B. ALLEN
AGE 50 HANDICAP 7
Middletown, Ohio



JEFF BLIND
AGE 35 HANDICAP 9
New York City



DAVE BOLLMAN
AGE 71 HANDICAP 22
Sun City, Arizona



RICKY BROWN
AGE 36 HANDICAP +2
Fort Worth



JASON BURIAN
AGE 32 HANDICAP 14
Edwardsville



BOB FLADELAND
AGE 77 HANDICAP 32
Sun City, Arizona



DANIEL GRATTAN
AGE 36 HANDICAP 8
New York City



DR BRIAN HOLTAN
AGE 59 HANDICAP 17
Peoria, Arizona



PAUL IANNIELLO
AGE 53 HANDICAP 5
Whitefish, Montana



DAVID JACKSON
AGE 60 HANDICAP 9
Valencia, California



STEVE LACHMAN
AGE 57 HANDICAP 5
La Quinta, California



PETER LEE
AGE 47 HANDICAP 9
Danville, California



LARRY MCCOY
AGE 50 HANDICAP 5
Newtown, Connecticut



ANAND MUDALIAR
AGE 33 HANDICAP 14
Wilmington, Delaware



JASON MUSSER
AGE 40 HANDICAP 1
Fresno, California



JASON SHIPLEY
AGE 56 HANDICAP 5
Parkville, Missouri



GARY STEER
AGE 63 HANDICAP 25
Sun City, Arizona



IKE SWAUGER
AGE 81 HANDICAP 22
Sun City, Arizona

▸ FITTER



MATT TRIMBUR
PGA professional, Golf Galaxy, Pittsburgh

▸ HOT LIST JUDGES



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Golf Digest Senior Editor of Equipment



E. MICHAEL JOHNSON
Golf Digest Equipment Editor



JOHN STREGE
Writer, GolfDigest.com

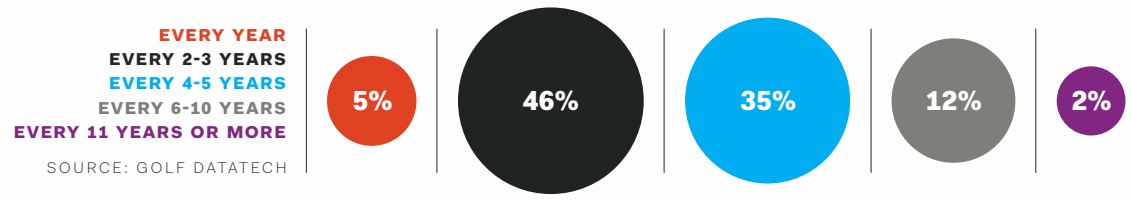
COOL HOT LIST FACTS

- **97,835 —** Words of club-specific comments from players logged by editors during Hot List Summit evaluations
- **105,384 —** Air kilometres of editors on research trips for the Hot List
- **23,000 —** Estimated number of bees in a nest next to the range during Hot List Summit testing
- **1,368 —** Kilograms of equipment shipped from Golf Digest headquarters to the Hot List site
- **1,338 —** Number of drivers, fairway woods, hybrids, irons, wedges and putters across all lofts and shaft flexes used during the Hot List Summit evaluations
- **798 —** Megabytes of information in technical documents submitted by manufacturers for Hot List evaluations
- **90 —** Number of hotel-room nights of editors on Hot List research trips
- **87 —** Number of hours Hot List judges spent in deliberations
- **54 —** Number of lunch-time massages given by massage therapists from The Wigwam's Red Door Spa over three days of Hot List Summit club testing
- **50 —** Average number of wedge shots hit per club per player during wedge evaluations at the Summit
- **44 —** Players, retailers, scientists and editors in attendance at the Hot List Summit at The Wigwam resort in Arizona, October 2014
- **13 —** Number of spray-on sunscreen canisters used by panelists during the Summit
- **11 —** Number of rolls of packing tape used to box up the clubs after testing was completed
- **8 —** Days of robot testing conducted by Golf Laboratories of San Diego
- **4 —** Rolls of medical tape used to prevent panelist blisters
- **3 —** Number of people it took to sort out our tour-level balls from the regular range balls
- **0 —** Number of players with a handicap higher than 9 who hit clubs in the Players iron category

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20

▸ How often do you purchase a new driver:



Why a Driver Fitting Matters

Our test found 21 metres you're missing

BY MIKE STACHURA

JEFF FLAGG PERSONIFIES POTENTIAL. The former baseball player got hooked on golf long-drive competitions a few years ago. Last September he won the RE/MAX World Long Drive Championship, earning a spot in the final with a swing speed of 240 kilometres per hour and a drive of 423 metres (60kph faster and 158m farther than the average US PGA Tour player). ▸ That's a peek at the game's future, but Flagg says a key to achieving those numbers has been refining his driver and swing on a launch monitor. "I won by 13 inches, so shifting the weight in the head, tweaking the settings, that adjustability contributed to those 13 inches," he says. Flagg's methods for reaching his potential can work for the rest of us, too.

Trouble is, average golfers aren't taking advantage of the game's increasingly sophisticated technology. Our exclusive player test revealed that *golfers across all ability levels are leaving an average of 21 metres on the table*.

Golf Digest studied how 150 average golfers hit their drivers. We measured swing speeds from 90 kilometres per hour to more than 200, and handicaps from 0 to 36. For the test, we used a Foresight Sports GC2 launch monitor that measured swing speed, ball speed, launch angle, spin rate and distance. We also asked dozens of the world's 100 Best Clubfitters to share similar launch data from their customers. What we found is that the average golfer launches the ball too low, generates too much backspin and doesn't make solid contact with the centre of the face. Specifically, we're not hitting it as far as we should given our respective swing speeds. Nine out of 10 golfers in our test hit the ball short of what we estimate their potential to be. What's a good estimate for your driving-distance potential? If you're not hitting it 2.5 to 2.7 times your clubhead speed, you need a better-fitting driver, a lesson, or both. This means if your swing speed is 120 kilometres per hour, you have the potential to hit your drive at least 170 metres. If your swing speed is 160kph, your distance potential could be as high as 250 metres. But most golfers are woefully short of their potential. Two-thirds of the players in our survey weren't within 13 metres of their potential driving distance, and half of those were 25 or more metres short of optimum.

Here are the keys to more distance, and all of them are easily understood by working with a clubfitter who uses a launch monitor to analyse your swing and ball flight. First, there's how fast the ball leaves the clubface. Ball speed is dictated by your swing speed, but golfers can maximise their potential ball speed by contacting the centre of the face more consistently. All launch monitors measure how efficient the relationship is between clubhead speed and ball speed, or what's known as "smash factor." Generally, the maximum for that ratio is 1.50, so the closer you can get to that number, the fewer metres you'll be wasting. But the golfers in our test too often were miles short. Eighty per cent were below an ideal smash factor of 1.47, and 40 per cent were at 1.40 or less.

The second ingredient is launch angle, or the upward angle of the ball as it leaves the clubface. In our test, more than a third of the golfers had a launch angle below 11 degrees. Unless your swing speed is 190 kilometres per hour, you should be striving for a 13-degree launch angle or higher. Any lower, and the ball won't stay in the air long enough to maximise total distance.

The third ingredient for distance is optimising the backspin rate once the ball leaves the clubface. To max your distance, you want to launch shots relatively high with low spin. Off-centre strikes at a low launch angle often result in excessive spin: a perfect recipe for short hitting. Still, almost half of the golfers we tested had spin rates above 3,000 revolutions per minute. If you can get your rpm below 3,000, you'll be closer to the ideal of higher launch and lower spin.

Our data suggests that many golfers would benefit from more loft on their driver and perhaps a softer flexing shaft. But what we all really need is a quality driver fitting. With the feedback available from launch monitors and the increasing ability of good fitters to work with quality instructors, the right fitting can change your clubs and even your swing.

We're not talking major reconstruction. Simple things like shifting the ball forward in your stance, teeing it higher and swinging slightly up on the ball can dramatically change distance. A recent test by TrackMan, whose launch monitor is used on the US PGA Tour, found that a swing speed of 150 kilometres per hour can gain about 30 metres by just swinging up on the ball.

Our study indicates those metres are easily within reach of average golfers. Plenty of fitters see those improvements every day, and not just for big hitters. "Players with a swing speed of 100 to 140kph show the biggest loss as a percentage of distance if they don't optimise launch, spin and smash factor," says Dan Sueltz of D'Lance Golf in Colorado, a 100 Best Clubfitter.

With more varieties of drivers available, and with dozens of adjustments of loft, lie and face angle, as well as centre-of-gravity locations – even within the same head – it's easier to optimise a club to any swing. A quality fitter can help you achieve your potential. It's what Jeff Flagg embodies these days, and he says the feeling reminds him of his baseball career.

"The contact felt pretty much the same as a 400-foot home run," he says. "It takes off and doesn't come down. It feels effortless." That's a feeling every golfer should have. And can have. – *Additional reporting by John Strege*

HARRY CAMPBELL REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION FROM GOLF DIGEST (USA EDITION) MARCH 2015. COPYRIGHT © 2015 THE GOLF DIGEST COMPANIES, WHICH IS A SUBSIDIARY OF ADVANCE PUBLICATIONS, INC.

Drivers

More Options, More Distance



CALLAWAY

▸ Big Bertha Alpha 815

PERFORMANCE
★ ★ ★ ★ ½

INNOVATION
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

LOOK / SOUND / FEEL
★ ★ ★ ★ ½

DEMAND
★ ★ ★ ★

CALLAWAY

▸ Big Bertha V Series

PERFORMANCE
★ ★ ★ ★ ½

INNOVATION
★ ★ ★ ★

LOOK / SOUND / FEEL
★ ★ ★ ★ ½

DEMAND
★ ★ ★

CALLAWAY

▸ XR/XR Pro

PERFORMANCE
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

INNOVATION
★ ★ ★ ★ ½

LOOK / SOUND / FEEL
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

DEMAND
★ ★ ★ ★ ½

COBRA

▸ Fly-Z

PERFORMANCE
★ ★ ★ ★ ½

INNOVATION
★ ★ ★ ★

LOOK / SOUND / FEEL
★ ★ ★ ★

DEMAND
★ ★ ★ ½



COBRA

▸ Fly-Z+

PERFORMANCE
★ ★ ★ ★

INNOVATION
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

LOOK / SOUND / FEEL
★ ★ ★ ½

DEMAND
★ ★ ★

NIKE

▸ Vapor Flex

PERFORMANCE
★ ★ ★ ★ ½

INNOVATION
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

LOOK / SOUND / FEEL
★ ★ ★ ★

DEMAND
★ ★ ★

NIKE

▸ Vapor Speed/Pro

PERFORMANCE
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

INNOVATION
★ ★ ★ ★ ½

LOOK / SOUND / FEEL
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

DEMAND
★ ★ ★ ½

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PING

▸ G30/SF Tec/LS Tec

PERFORMANCE
★ ★ ★ ★ ½

INNOVATION
★ ★ ★ ★ ½

LOOK / SOUND / FEEL
★ ★ ★ ★ ½

DEMAND
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

TITLEIST

▸ 915D2/915D3

PERFORMANCE
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

INNOVATION
★ ★ ★ ★ ½

LOOK / SOUND / FEEL
★ ★ ★ ★ ½

DEMAND
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

TAYLORMADE

▸ R15/R15 TP

PERFORMANCE
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

INNOVATION
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

LOOK / SOUND / FEEL
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

DEMAND
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

WILSON STAFF

▸ D200

PERFORMANCE
★ ★ ★ ★ ½

INNOVATION
★ ★ ★ ★

LOOK / SOUND / FEEL
★ ★ ★ ★

DEMAND
★ ★



BRIDGESTONE

▸ J715

PERFORMANCE
★ ★ ★ ★

INNOVATION
★ ★ ★ ★

LOOK / SOUND / FEEL
★ ★ ★ ★

DEMAND
★ ★

SRIXON

▸ Srixon Z545/Z745

PERFORMANCE
★ ★ ★ ★

INNOVATION
★ ★ ★ ★ ½

LOOK / SOUND / FEEL
★ ★ ★ ★

DEMAND
★ ★

MIZUNO

▸ JPX-850

PERFORMANCE
★ ★ ★ ★

INNOVATION
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

LOOK / SOUND / FEEL
★ ★ ★ ½

DEMAND
★ ★



CALLAWAY
BIG BERTHA ALPHA 815

HOT Want adjustability? It's everywhere you look on this 460-cubic-centimetre head. You can move weights in the heel and toe to correct slices and hooks, tweak the loft to one of eight settings and flip a central weight to optimise your spin – all independent of one another. That means if the loft is correct but the spin isn't, flipping the central weight could solve your problems. But that kind of freedom also requires saving weight. Callaway neatly does this by using eight materials, including a lighter, more flexible face and a composite crown. So it's not only more adjustable than last year's model, it's lighter, too.
NOT A $US100 trade-in offer for last year's model expired in December.
COMMENTS (L) The face doesn't sound fast, but it feels it, and the results prove it. (M) It's the ideal shape for a driver: big without looking it. (H) I felt I wasn't good enough for this, but after flipping the weight, my ball flight was so consistent.



CALLAWAY
BIG BERTHA V SERIES

HOT Making the ball go farther starts by making the driver go faster. That's why the V Series is lighter and aerodynamically engineered. The overall weight is about 300 grams, or roughly 20 to 25 grams less than other Big Bertha drivers. Another cool part about this driver is how Callaway has softened the crown's curves (like a bike racer's helmet) to make the driver smoother through the air, especially late in the downswing as the clubhead is gaining speed.
NOT If less weight is a priority for you, there are lighter options out there.
COMMENTS (L) Well-struck shots fly slightly higher than I'd like, but it's still a penetrating ball flight. I like the trajectory on thin shots. (M) Strong but silent. You could bomb it past your friends, and they'd have no idea. (H) It walks that line between aggressive and just the right sound and pitch.



CALLAWAY
XR/XR PRO

HOT When it comes to improving a driver's aerodynamics, Callaway engineers make the case that the key piece of real estate is the first part of the crown. That's why there's a staggered step on top of the head. The goal is to reduce aerodynamic drag (the way air flows across the top of the clubhead) during the downswing and boost your swing speed. Throw in the lighter, more flexible face design found in the Alpha, and you have a driver that's almost 20 grams lighter (and a lot cheaper!) than its big brother. Plus just as smart.
NOT Extra-long shafts, like the 46-inch one here, don't necessarily produce more distance for all golfers.
COMMENTS (L) The matte-black finish looks stealthy, but the distance is loud, long and consistent. I prefer the bigger sweet spot of the XR model. (M) Sort of looks like molded plastic, but all that melts away when you swing it. (H) It powers through the ball like the ball isn't even there. Plenty of forgiveness, too.



COBRA
FLY-Z

HOT The large face and oversize frame scream forgiveness, but it's the internal-weight savings that achieve it. The face, crown and housing for the extremely intuitive eight-way adjustable hosel are selectively thinned. Much of that saved weight is pushed to the rear of the clubhead to give you greater stability on off-centre hits and help you launch the ball higher. A channel etched out of the face's perimeter is designed to increase ball speed (aka distance) on off-centre strikes.
NOT Unless you're one of the Power Rangers, six stock colours is at least three too many.
COMMENTS (L) I like the simple technology. Grab it off the rack, and you get a pretty good result. It launches the ball higher than it used to with a powerful flight. (M) I initially thought the bulky head would be distracting. But from takeaway through impact it was very comfortable. (H) Cobra did a nice job of making it less outlandish. There's a bit of a hot sound, which is nice.



COBRA
FLY-Z+

HOT The designers at Cobra have listened to the debate about whether the centre of gravity in a driver should be located near the front or tucked in the back and decided to, well, let *you* decide. A 15-gram sole weight can be placed rearward if you prefer more carry distance, or forward for less spin and a hotter landing angle. The only thing easier to understand? Eight adjustable loft settings, which are marked as numbers, completing a package that is the definition of user-friendly.
NOT Some golfers need more than 11.5 degrees of loft when the weight is flipped forward.
COMMENTS (L) There's a soft yet powerful feel at impact. (M) I really like the penetrating trajectory. If you enjoy the length without the noise, this is the driver for you. (H) I was hitting the ball too low, so I moved the weight towards the back, and the results were much better.



NIKE
VAPOR FLEX

HOT Just like the Vapor Speed and Pro models, the Flex has the stabilising sole cavity, the face-flex-enhancing sole channel and the 15 loft and face-angle settings. But it adds a second layer of adjustability that most other drivers don't: It lets you tweak spin and launch angle without changing the loft setting. Why does that matter? Well, let's say the 10.5-degree setting gives you a better launch angle, but you want less spin. The weight slug in the sole can move the centre of gravity more forward for less spin and to launch the ball lower. Same is true if the 9.5-degree setting gives you the right amount of spin but not enough height: Position the heavy end of the slug rearward for a higher ball flight.
NOT Better players might be intrigued by the weight movement but not by a closed face-angle setting.
COMMENTS (L) You feel like you can hit up on it as much as you want, and it won't balloon. (M) The sound is a little muffled, but the ball flight is powerful. (H) The adjustment is easy, even for the golfer who doesn't know a lot about fitting.



NIKE
VAPOR SPEED/PRO

HOT Nike's strategy here seems counterintuitive: Stiffen the clubhead to make it more flexible. How is stiffer more flexible? The theory is, if you stabilise the rear half of the club, the front – especially the face – can flex more. Nike does this by changing the cavity in the sole. It now has parallel beams designed to concentrate the flexing to the front of the club without losing energy in the rear. Benefiting from that structure is the channel in the front of the sole. Running the width of the club, it varies slightly in dimension so your off-centre strikes are less awful. The Speed version's larger shape is friendlier for most golfers. (Rory and Tiger use versions of the Pro and Speed, respectively.) Both models let you position any of its five lofts in neutral, closed or open.
NOT We'd like a better selection of no-charge custom shafts.
COMMENTS (L) My ball apexes fast and doesn't move from there. (M) Best-sounding Nike driver I've hit in a long time, maybe ever. Crisp bullets. (H) I like the bigger size of the Speed model. I felt in control of the club. The green lines on the face help me line up correctly.



PING
G30/SF TEC/LS TEC

HOT It's easy to get caught up in the buzz over aerodynamics and "turbulators" (those shark fins on the crown designed to smooth out air flow over the clubhead during the swing). But the G30's strength is a highly stable head with a large face. Its shape and internal weighting help off-centre hits launch with speed and distance similar to centre strikes. Two additional head designs answer the needs of better players (the lower-spinning LS Tec) and slicers (the lighter, heel-weighted SF Tec). They broaden the G30 family, but the lineage of maximum forgiveness is unchanged.
NOT It would be nice if the sole weight could be adjusted by the golfer.
COMMENTS (L) It's a little longer from front to back than I like, but it's dead straight on every swing. (M) The turbulators draw your eye to the ball. It has a springy, loud sound, but not in a way that'll draw jokes from your mates. (H) Looks strong and menacing. Slightly high-pitched sound, but the face felt super-alive.



TAYLORMADE
R15/R15 TP

HOT It has been more than a decade since TaylorMade started the adjustable-driver craze. But the R15's 12-setting hosel and two sliding weights in the sole are supporting the company's recent desire to decrease spin via a low-forward centre of gravity. The company's goal is to increase the launch angle – because that's what most golfers need – while limiting spin. That's why nearly 75 per cent of the R15's mass is in the front of the clubhead. The sole track is designed to do more than house two 12.5-gram weights. It's closer to the face than 2013's SLDR to give more *oomph* on your mis-hits, particularly

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A driver fitting **with range balls** isn't a fitting. Use the ball you normally play.



shots hit low on the face. In all, the R15 is smarter and more forgiving.
NOT With 1,836 possible configurations, how different is position 937 from position 938?
COMMENTS (L) This is a clean, muscular-looking club. The ball flight was mid to high and seemed to stay up forever. (M) Powerful block-of-granite feel all over the face. Ball flight was easy to tweak. (H) I went from mediocre to stunning shots just by changing the weights.



TITLEIST
915 D2/D3

HOT There's a welcome consistency to the look of Titleist drivers and their 16-way adjustable hosel. But the 915 series breaks new ground by installing a channel in the sole. The depth and length of the channel aren't designed just to help the face flex at impact (for more ball speed). It also helps shots launch with less spin. Both the crown and face have been strategically thinned to save weight and improve what happens when you don't find the centre of the face. Extra help without losing the classic shape Titleist is known for is a refreshing development.
NOT It's time the adjustability included user-controlled weight movement.
COMMENTS (L) For a Titleist, it was slightly louder, but not in a bad way. When I flushed it, the face let me know. More important, I felt like I was in control of the club the entire time. (M) Sharp, clean, and the alignment aid adds a bit of class. Has a powerful titanium pop to it. (H) Just felt like I had really good control. A cathartic and home-run sound.



WILSON STAFF
D200

HOT Almost all companies have explored driver adjustability, and a few have pursued ultralight weight. Wilson is the rare one to emphasise both. The club's weight (268 grams) is less than that of six golf balls, and the driver's balance point is designed to make it easier for the club to move faster with the same swing. Each loft can be adjusted six ways, including three draw settings. Finally, the driver features a variable-thickness face for more consistent off-centre-hit performance.
NOT Few shaft options for better players.
COMMENTS (L) Shots came out more powerful than you thought they would based on the sound. My shot was still rising two-thirds of the way out. (M) When you hit it on the screws, it has that unique combination of firm but soft, and the draw adjustment works. Subtle sound, but the distance was there. (H) You notice the light feel right away. Easy to make an inside move.



BRIDGESTONE
J715

HOT While others have focused on ways to make the sole more flexible through slots or channels, Bridgestone believes thinning the crown is better. A series of internal ridges in the front of the crown are designed to produce an accordion-like effect, yielding more ball speed off the face and a higher launch angle.
NOT Charging $US16 a pop for extra movable weights is like a country club charging members for tees.
COMMENTS (L) Good-looking club that sets up square. A tremendous thud, and you see the ball jump off the face. (M) It has a muted metal sound. (H) I hit five shots, and although the one mis-hit got penalised, the other four were super straight.



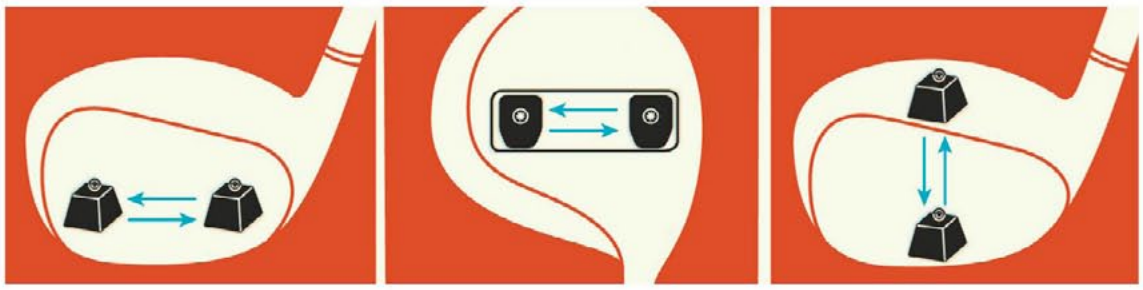
MIZUNO
JPX-850

HOT The beauty of adjustability and movable weights is the freedom to set up a club however you want. The problem is that manufacturers often limit how you can do it. Mizuno gives you more freedom than most by letting you position its movable weights in the heel or toe and front, middle and back locations. That way you can tweak direction, trajectory and spin to optimise your distance. The adjustable hosel completes the package with eight settings across five lofts.
NOT More and heavier weights would have a greater impact.
COMMENTS (L) I like how it sits. It looks ready. The adjustability definitely changes the ball flight. (M) I like the old-school driver-like sound of it – a solid thud. There's so much adjustability, you might need to be a Mensa member to get everything out of it. (H) Good, almost muted, soft persimmon sound. The weight through impact was solid. Might be a hair less forgiving.



SRIXON
Z545/Z745

HOT There are two ways you can produce more distance: Make the face more flexible, and make the golfer swing the club faster. These Srixon drivers accomplish the first by using a cupface that wraps around the perimeter. But it's the second part that's more interesting. Both the standard Z545 and smaller Z745 are designed with a higher-balance-point shaft and a slightly heavier head. The shaft with a higher balance point is intended to make it easier to swing the club faster, and more mass in the head delivers more energy to the ball.
NOT The 545 would be better if both sole weights were movable.
COMMENTS (L) Clean look. Sounded harsher than it felt. Don't be too aggressive, and it will work for you. (M) This thing is sexy – Cindy Crawford without the mole. Very cushion-y feel. (H) The ball didn't feel hot off the face, but when it was in the air, it was the opposite – hot, high and right where I expected it.



Twist and Shout

Your guide to adjustable drivers

BEFORE you toss that driver wrench into the depths of your golf bag, take it with you to the range and start adjusting your new club's hosel and weights to see how your shots change. The options can get overwhelming, from "gravity cores" and "flight pods" to "sliding split weights" and "flip zones." But don't let the snazzy names confuse you.

Movable weight (or equipment speak for moving the centre of gravity) can be shifted left or right, up or down and front or back. Sometimes all three. Working with a qualified clubfitter is very important, but tinkering on your own can reveal how adjustability works. Here are the basics:

▸**Hook:** If you're yanking it left, put more weight towards the toe. The heavier the weight and the farther out you put it, the more this helps slow clubface rotation so it won't close as much. Also, moving weight towards the toe can generate more fade spin.

▸**Slice:** Put more weight in the heel. This moves the centre of gravity (CG) closer to the shaft, produces draw spin and helps close the face on the downswing.

Screwy:
Of the models tracked by Golf Datatech, 97 per cent of driver sales are adjustable heads.

▸**Off-centre hits:** Distributing weight equally towards the heel and toe, as well as towards the rear of the club, helps stabilise the clubhead so your off-centre strikes lose less steam.

▸**Worm burners:** First, add loft – and probably more than you think. Shots with your driver should fly as high as a wedge shot. They just reach that point farther downrange. Adjusting the weight towards the back can increase launch angle, too.

▸**Sky balls:** Reduce loft, sparingly. Moving weight forward and/or lower can create less spin and lower trajectory. – KEELY LEVINS

TOP: AL MURPHY • RIGHT: HARRY CAMPBELL



CALLAWAY

▸ Big Bertha Alpha 815

PERFORMANCE
★ ★ ★ ★

INNOVATION
★ ★ ★ ★ ½

LOOK / SOUND / FEEL
★ ★ ★ ★ ½

DEMAND
★ ★ ½

ADAMS

▸ Tight Lies/ Tight Lies Ti

PERFORMANCE
★ ★ ★ ★ ½

INNOVATION
★ ★ ★ ★ ½

LOOK / SOUND / FEEL
★ ★ ★ ★ ½

DEMAND
★ ★ ★

TITLEIST

▸ 915F/915Fd

PERFORMANCE
★ ★ ★ ★ ½

INNOVATION
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

LOOK / SOUND / FEEL
★ ★ ★ ★ ½

DEMAND
★ ★ ★ ★

TAYLORMADE

▸ R15/R15 TP

PERFORMANCE
★ ★ ★ ★ ½

INNOVATION
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

LOOK / SOUND / FEEL
★ ★ ★ ★ ½

DEMAND
★ ★ ★ ★



CALLAWAY

▸ XR/XR Pro

PERFORMANCE
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

INNOVATION
★ ★ ★ ★ ½

LOOK / SOUND / FEEL
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

DEMAND
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

MIZUNO

▸ JPX-850

PERFORMANCE
★ ★ ★ ★ ½

INNOVATION
★ ★ ★ ★ ½

LOOK / SOUND / FEEL
★ ★ ★ ★

DEMAND
★ ★

PING

▸ G30

PERFORMANCE
★ ★ ★ ★ ½

INNOVATION
★ ★ ★ ★ ½

LOOK / SOUND / FEEL
★ ★ ★ ★ ½

DEMAND
★ ★ ★ ★ ½

Fairway Woods

Drivers aren't the only faces getting faster

How many fairway woods does the average US PGA Tour player use?

1 ▸ 61% 2 ▸ 37% # ▸ 1% 3 ▸ 1% 0

SOURCE: GOLF DIGEST RESEARCH

CALLAWAY

▸ Big Bertha V Series

PERFORMANCE ★ ★ ★ ★

INNOVATION ★ ★ ★ ★

LOOK / SOUND / FEEL ★ ★ ★ ★

DEMAND ★ ★ ½

COBRA

▸ Fly-Z/Fly-Z+

PERFORMANCE ★ ★ ★ ★

INNOVATION ★ ★ ★ ★ ½

LOOK / SOUND / FEEL ★ ★ ★ ½

DEMAND ★ ★ ★

WILSON STAFF

▸ D200

PERFORMANCE ★ ★ ★ ★

INNOVATION ★ ★ ★ ★

LOOK / SOUND / FEEL ★ ★ ★ ½

DEMAND ★ ★

NIKE

▸ Vapor Speed/Flex

PERFORMANCE ★ ★ ★ ★

INNOVATION ★ ★ ★ ★ ½

LOOK / SOUND / FEEL ★ ★ ★ ★

DEMAND ★ ★ ½

The more **you slice**, the more you should opt for higher lofts on fairway woods.





ADAMS
TIGHT LIES & TIGHT LIES Ti

HOT The original Tight Lies idea was to flip the shape of the fairway wood upside down: More face area and weight low make it easier to launch the ball high. Now Adams is upgrading its low-profile technology by adding distance. Slots are cut through the crown and sole to help the face flex for more ball speed. But the biggest improvement might be the aesthetics. Unlike past years, the crown opening is filled with a flexible epoxy, neatly hidden.

NOT The paint job is primer-like.

COMMENTS (L) It doesn't feel too light. You sense you're powering through the ball at impact. Great confidence regardless of the lie. (M) As the jockey Red Pollard said about Seabiscuit, "Though he be but little, he is fierce".



CALLAWAY
BIG BERTHA ALPHA 815

HOT OK, so adjustability isn't your first thought when looking for a fairway wood. Callaway, however, makes a case for it with this compact head. There's an eight-way adjustable hosel and two sole weights: three and 30 grams. Moving the weights around can change trajectory and forgiveness. There are also three stock heads (14, 16 and 18 degrees), whose loft can be adjusted from minus-1 to plus-2 degrees.

NOT With only 2 degrees between each head, there's potential for confusing overlap.

COMMENTS (L) The compact head lets you work it out of some scary lies. (M) A little intimidating for me. But I kept hitting beautiful, positive shots.



CALLAWAY
XR/XR PRO

HOT Rather than having one fairway wood that can be adjusted, this model offers different heads for different needs. In addition to three face heights in the Standard, Pro and 3Deep models, the range accommodates 10 lofts, including the only stock 11-wood from a major manufacturer. Callaway also improved its face technology from last year's X2 Hot. Like its predecessor, the face wraps around the crown and sole to enhance ball speed. But this is a lighter variation, freeing up weight to help reduce spin.

NOT The face graphics seem overdone.

COMMENTS (L) Easy to launch, even the 14-degree version. (H) It produces a woody, powerful thump.



MIZUNO
JPX-850

HOT Anyone who has ever hit a thin shot with a fairway wood (everyone) is the focus of Mizuno's wave-structured sole. The undulating shape on the bottom is designed to increase distance when you make contact low on the face. Saved weight from a thinned crown is repositioned to reduce spin for more distance. Each of the three heads can be adjusted eight ways, so the total range of lofts runs from 13 to 23 degrees.

NOT The 3-wood seems a little oversize.

COMMENTS (L) Pretty much anywhere on the face will give you a good result. A very pleasing, flush sensation at impact. (M) A low-frequency thud at impact, like it means business. Shots travelled out there where they ought to be.



PING
G30

HOT Like the driver, the fairway wood has crown protrusions called turbulators. But they're not the source of extra distance here. It's Ping's use of a thin, strong steel face insert and a large hitting area that give shots more velocity. All three adjustable heads get smaller as the loft increases to control trajectory. Those turbulators? They do serve as a striking alignment aid.

NOT The 3-wood would be easier to use if the standard loft started at 15 degrees.

COMMENTS (L) I can get this up or knock it down a little if I want. (M) The turbulators are mean-looking, like they're going to kill the ball. Despite that, the feel at impact is baby soft.



TAYLORMADE
R15/R15 TP

HOT Because fairway woods are no easier to hit straight than drivers, the R15 has a similar sliding-weight channel as the driver. The weight, a hefty 25 grams, can shift to either side to calm your hook or slice. But the channel also has the benefit of creating extra flexibility low on the face. Each loft can be tweaked 2 degrees in either direction, meaning a 3HL loft (16.5 degrees) can be turned into anything from a strong 3-wood to a strong 5-wood.

NOT The 5-wood is about the size of some of the company's hybrids.

COMMENTS (L) Easy to get in the air with a very high flight. (M) The low-profile look gives you confidence that you can get it off the ground easily.



TITLEIST
915F/915Fd

HOT The visuals are still classic Titleist, but the fairway woods now come with the technology of its new drivers. Specifically, we're talking about that narrow channel in the sole. It's thinner and closer to the face than on the drivers, but its function is similar: to reduce spin and enhance ball speed for more distance. There also are 16 settings on the two adjustable head shapes, including the more-compact and flatter-trajectory 915Fd.

NOT It doesn't affect performance, but cleaning debris out of the sole slot (a tee is too big) is tedious.

COMMENTS (L) I felt like I got a little boost off the deck. (M) The sound and feel are sublime – solid, stable, forceful.



CALLAWAY
BIG BERTHA V SERIES

HOT If this club looks vaguely familiar, what you're seeing is a modern take on Callaway's user-friendly Warbird sole. That, and the company is bringing back the Heavenwood, a 7-wood with a longer-than-standard shaft to produce more ball speed and to launch the ball higher. However, it's not only a throwback. The modern touches include less weight and aerodynamic shaping. The idea is that the same effort will produce more clubhead speed and more distance.

NOT We'd like the Heaven-wood better if the shaft were slightly shorter.

COMMENTS (L) Definitely has an extra gear. (M) It's the point-and-shoot camera of golf clubs. Produces a consistent high trajectory. The turf interaction was superb.



COBRA
FLY-Z/FLY-Z+

HOT If you want the face to flex, it involves more than making it thin. First, you need high-strength steel, which Cobra uses in a larger area of the face than before. Adding a feature to enhance face flexibility also helps: Cobra uses a thin indented ring around the perimeter of the face that's designed to make mis-hits fly farther. The two adjustable head styles include the more-forgiving, higher-launching Fly-Z and the compact, spin-reducing Fly-Z+.

NOT High-lofted fairway woods with 43-inch shafts should be a special offering, not standard.

COMMENTS (L) An aggressive *thwack* will tell your foursome you drilled one. (M) A classic, compact shape. It distributes the mass nicely for a balanced feel.



NIKE
VAPOR SPEED/FLEX

HOT Although the compact Flex version is adjustable and the more-forgiving Speed isn't, both use a channel in the sole to make the face flex for distance. What's unique about this channel is the cavity behind it. The support beams within the cavity are designed to focus all the flexing close to the face. The average-golfer-friendly Speed is larger than last year's Covert 2.0, and the crown slopes more to help shots launch higher.

NOT Just two lofts on the more affordable Speed isn't nearly enough.

COMMENTS (L) It has that fist-into-palm sound that makes you feel like you're pounding it out there. Impressive off a tee. (M) It produced a good baby draw for me.



WILSON STAFF
D200

HOT Wilson unveils its lightest fairway woods ever. Fuelled by a 49-gram shaft, the club is designed to be easier to swing fast with the same effort. But it's not all about weight. There's also a thin, high-strength steel face that produces more flex on centre strikes as well as toe and heel mis-hits.

NOT Players who need lightweight fairway woods would likely want a higher-loft option, too.

COMMENTS (L) One of the easier fairway woods to swing. (M) The lightness is great. I'm able to control it and get the ball up in the air quickly.

AL MURPHY

ADAMS

▸ Red

PERFORMANCE
★ ★ ★ ★ ½

INNOVATION
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

LOOK / SOUND / FEEL
★ ★ ★ ★

DEMAND
★ ★ ★

ADAMS

▸ Tight Lies

PERFORMANCE
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

INNOVATION
★ ★ ★ ★ ½

LOOK / SOUND / FEEL
★ ★ ★ ★ ½

DEMAND
★ ★ ★

CALLAWAY

▸ XR/XR Pro

PERFORMANCE
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

INNOVATION
★ ★ ★ ★ ½

LOOK / SOUND / FEEL
★ ★ ★ ★ ½

DEMAND
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

COBRA

▸ Fly-Z/Fly-Z XL

PERFORMANCE
★ ★ ★ ★ ½

INNOVATION
★ ★ ★ ★

LOOK / SOUND / FEEL
★ ★ ★ ★ ½

DEMAND
★ ★ ★

CALLAWAY

▸ Big Bertha Alpha 815

PERFORMANCE
★ ★ ★ ★ ½

INNOVATION
★ ★ ★ ★ ½

LOOK / SOUND / FEEL
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

DEMAND
★ ★ ½

Hybrids

More reasons to ditch your long irons



NIKE

▸ Vapor Speed/Flex

PERFORMANCE
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

INNOVATION
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

LOOK / SOUND / FEEL
★ ★ ★ ★ ½

DEMAND
★ ★ ★

PING

▸ G30

PERFORMANCE
★ ★ ★ ★ ½

INNOVATION
★ ★ ★ ★

LOOK / SOUND / FEEL
★ ★ ★ ★ ½

DEMAND
★ ★ ★ ★

TAYLORMADE

▸ R15

PERFORMANCE
★ ★ ★ ★ ½

INNOVATION
★ ★ ★ ★ ½

LOOK / SOUND / FEEL
★ ★ ★ ★ ½

DEMAND
★ ★ ★ ½

TITLEIST

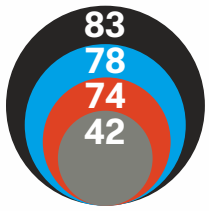
▸ 915H/915Hd

PERFORMANCE
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

INNOVATION
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

LOOK / SOUND / FEEL
★ ★ ★ ★ ★

DEMAND
★ ★ ★ ★



Percentage of golfers using a hybrid:

- 2014
- 2011
- 2008
- 2005

SOURCE: GOLF DATATECH

CALLAWAY

- Big Bertha

PERFORMANCE
★ ★ ★ ★

INNOVATION
★ ★ ★ ★ ½

LOOK / SOUND / FEEL
★ ★ ★ ½

DEMAND
★ ★ ★

MIZUNO

- JPX-850

PERFORMANCE
★ ★ ★ ★ ½

INNOVATION
★ ★ ★ ★

LOOK / SOUND / FEEL
★ ★ ★ ★

DEMAND
★ ★

TOUR EDGE

- Exotics E8

PERFORMANCE
★ ★ ★ ★

INNOVATION
★ ★ ★ ★

LOOK / SOUND / FEEL
★ ★ ★ ★

DEMAND
★ ★

WILSON STAFF

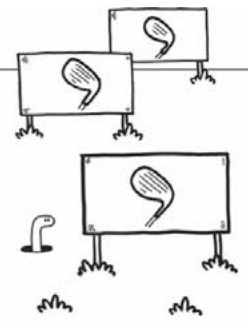
- D200

PERFORMANCE
★ ★ ★ ★

INNOVATION
★ ★ ★ ★

LOOK / SOUND / FEEL
★ ★ ★ ½

DEMAND
★ ★



Think of hybrids as **meeting certain distances**, not as replacing certain irons.



ADAMS
RED

HOT The benefit of adjustable weight in a hybrid? You can tame that slice or hook. The 25-gram weight in the sole shifts to the heel or toe to reduce unwanted sidespin and to help you square the face. Don't have that problem? Keep the weight in the centre for maximum energy transfer.
NOT Every weight change seems to require multiple steps.
COMMENTS (L) It's compact but still easy to hit, especially from the rough. (M) Centre-face hits feel like a hammer.



ADAMS
TIGHT LIES

HOT Ease of use is the theme here. That includes hidden but effective slots cut through the crown and sole that limit distance loss on mis-hits. Making it even more forgiving is the shallow face and how the sole lifts at the toe and heel to handle any lie.
NOT A quality hybrid ought to have a top-shelf grip.
COMMENTS (L) Even the ones I missed still worked. I could change shape and trajectory at will. (H) A beautiful, thumpy sound.



CALLAWAY
BIG BERTHA ALPHA 815

HOT The tour-inspired compact shape might appeal to a better player's eye, but it has plenty of average-player help inside. That includes a thin, high-strength steel cupface for more distance, and low, forward internal weighting for less spin.
NOT Callaway's familiar chevron alignment mark has gone missing.
COMMENTS (L) A nice crack off the face. You can get some muscle into a tight lie. (M) All the energy was going through the ball.



CALLAWAY
XR/XR PRO

HOT Callaway's wraparound thin face now gives even more at the bottom. The internal weighting on the sole is positioned low and forward like a wave (lower than last year's X2 Hot). That frees up the bottom of the face so it flexes better, particularly on thin shots.
NOT The Pro leans towards driving-iron feel.
COMMENTS (L) The toe is bulky, but in a good way, like it's easy to hit. The trajectory is boring with good distance. (M) I hit all kinds of shots. This made me feel like a good player.



COBRA
FLY-Z/FLY-Z XL

HOT Cobra's Fly-Z hybrids address the long-iron problems of distance and accuracy. There's the standard Fly-Z in three adjustable heads so you can dial in your distances. The offset, closed-face XL is designed to combat a slice. Both share distance technologies of a lighter face and rear weighting.
NOT Shaft lengths for the highest lofts are too long.
COMMENTS (L) Nice carry. A ball would stick on any green. (M) I'm really impressed with how high the ball went on mis-hits.



NIKE
VAPOR SPEED/FLEX

HOT You have to look beyond a hybrid's small face to find ways to improve distance. Nike puts a channel in the front part of the sole that bends with the face at impact for some extra pop. The sole cavity means there's weight low and forward to mitigate spin, but the head still stays stable to improve your mis-hits.
NOT A crown swoosh on a small head has the look of a billboard.
COMMENTS (L) It has that crisp, forged-iron feel. Into the wind, my ball flight kept a good trajectory. (M) It's as forgiving as my mother.



PING
G30

HOT A hot face is nice, but so is a playable ball flight. The faces on Ping's hybrids are plenty thin and flexible, but the size and internal weighting is staggered so the lower lofts launch high, and the higher lofts don't balloon.
NOT Priced high compared to most one-model, nonadjustable versions.
COMMENTS (M) It had a beautiful click at impact, almost like the irons. Easy to hit. (H) It has the sound of a home run with a Louisville Slugger.



TAYLORMADE
R15

HOT Don't be deceived by the tour-inspired shape and head size from the 1990s. The R15 has the modern touches of a sole slot to make off-centre shots, especially low hits, fly farther. It also lets you adjust the loft to get the distance you want.
NOT The peanut shape paired with a long shaft adds difficulty.
COMMENTS (L) It looks like a better player's iron but performs like a game-improvement club. (M) That professional trajectory is always nice to watch, especially when you're not a pro.



TITLEIST
915H/915Hd

HOT Titleist continues to break free of its better-players-only image with these hybrids. Consider how the sole channel here is deeper than on its drivers to produce more flex and less spin from a high-strength steel face that's already the thinnest in company history.
NOT Seven heads, each with 16-way adjustability, seem unnecessarily vast.
COMMENTS (L) It's like a finely oiled super car; it has all the horsepower, with a classic Titleist click. (M) The Hd lets me hit a baby draw. But the H is more of a pounder.



CALLAWAY
BIG BERTHA

HOT Hybrids are supposed to be easier to hit, so Callaway made the head the largest in its current line. Plus, it shifted more weight to the back to stabilise those mis-hits and help you launch it higher.
NOT Even with the extra adjustability, it's kind of a third wheel in Callaway's hybrid lineup.
COMMENTS (L) It has that familiar Callaway crack at impact. The wide sole would seem to be difficult to get out of a tough lie, but it was pretty easy. (M) Ball flight is penetrating and super reliable.



MIZUNO
JPX-850

HOT The compact shape and square setup are based on tour-staff input, but its technology was designed to help the paying customers. Specifically, it's the accordion-shape sole that helps expand the hottest part of the face towards the bottom where the biggest mis-hits happen.
NOT The 2-hybrid's open face serves a small audience.
COMMENTS (L) I hit a couple fat and still got them in the air. A nice, straight ball flight. (M) If you want a driver-replacement hybrid, this is the club.



TOUR EDGE
EXOTICS E8

HOT Tour Edge's Exotics clubs have long explored extra distance with unique face designs and materials, but it's the sole that plays the big part here. That redesigned grid on the bottom is intended to flex at impact to boost your carry distance.
NOT The adjustable sole weight is a clever swingweight-matching feature, but it should be free.
COMMENTS (L) I love how it sits tight on the ground. (H) I could sense where the face was throughout the swing.



WILSON STAFF
D200

HOT The special part about this lightweight hybrid line is how the head shapes change: They're larger on the lower lofts for better forgiveness, and smaller as the lofts increase to ease the transition to the irons. That thin, high-strength steel face doesn't hurt, either.
NOT We're all advocates of 7-hybrids but not at 4-iron lengths.
COMMENTS (M) A nice pop off the face. It took off with a little rise and dropped soft. (H) It's crazy light, but there was a clean transition on the downswing and into impact, as if the ball wasn't there.

AL MURPHY